

SERMONS
TO
COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS:

by the late
Rev. George Waggitt, A. M.

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COUNTRY & CONTEMPORARY

SERMONS



COUNTRY & CONTEMPORARY

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMONS

TO

COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS.

BY THE LATE

REV. GEO. HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beccles, Norfolk.

VOL. II.

Bury St. Edmund's:

PRINTED, FOR THE EDITORS, BY J. RACKHAM,
BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER.

1796

1108/100

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BY THE LATE

REN. GEO. MATTHEWS, A.M.



Director of the British Museum

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VOL. II.

SERMON I.

ON THE CATECHISM.

PROV. xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and
when he is old he will not depart from it.*

IT is of the utmost importance to instil, SERM.
I.
into the minds of young persons, right
sentiments of religion and morality; to
teach them, at the first opening of the un-
derstanding, what they ought to believe,
and what they ought to practise. If they
are not instructed in this necessary know-
ledge

VOL. II. B

SERM. I. ledge in their youth, there is great reason
 to fear that the cares and pleasures of the
 world will prevent their acquiring it at all;
 whereas right principles, properly incul-
 cated at that early season, will probably
 never desert them during the remaining
 part of their lives.

With this expectation, our church has
 provided a catechism, which is a form of
 instruction by question and answer; and
 she enjoins her members to teach it their
 children, as soon as they shall be able to
 learn it: and she further expects, that it
 should not only be known, but thoroughly
 understood by them, before they take on
 themselves, at their confirmation, those en-
 gagements which were made for them by
 their sureties at their baptism. This ca-
 techism contains, within a short compass,
 the chief heads of Christian faith and
 Christian obedience; and, though there are
 some obscure parts in it, yet, whatever is
 im-

important is clear, and so plain that, with **SERM.**
some little assistance from their elders, 
and a proper degree of attention on their
own parts, it may easily be comprehended,
by all, before they arrive at that age, when
they will become themselves answerable
for the observance of their baptismal vow.
It is to contribute my share towards this
good work, that I shall dedicate this and
some future discourses.

This catechism opens with a recital of
the privileges which baptism confers, and
of the promises which those, who answer
for the young person, make in his name.
It then proceeds to instruct him in the ar-
ticles of faith, which are contained in the
belief, to which a short explanation, of
what may be gathered from it, is added.
It goes on, to regulate his practice, by
setting before him the ten commandments;
after which, he is told that from these he
may learn his duty towards God and to-

SERM. wards his neighbour; and, in the answers
 I. to the two next questions, these duties are
 set forth more at large.

As it is impossible for us to do God's will without his special grace, which we can only expect to be granted to our diligent petitions, the catechism next presents us with the prayer which our Saviour himself taught to his disciples, and with a commentary or paraphrase upon it; and, lastly, it concludes with a short account of the two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper.

I shall make some few remarks on each of these, passing over in silence, or in a very few words, those parts which are obscure and immaterial for you to know; what is important, as I hinted before, is neither difficult to be explained or understood.

The first question, as to the name, arises from a custom which prevailed among various

rious nations, of giving to persons new SERM.
apellations on their being adopted into I.
new families; in like manner, we, on being
made members of Christ's family, received
a Christian name, which denotes our re-
lationship to him; this name, therefore, is
very aptly asked of us, when we are going
to be questioned further as to the privi-
leges which are conferred on us by bap-
tism. These are said to be three:—we
were made members of Christ, children of
God, and inheritors of the kingdom of
heaven; in other words, we are admitted
into the society of Christ's disciples, we
become one of that body of which he is the
head, we gain a title to the mercy of God,
and are put in a capacity of obtaining a
blessed immortality after death.

Of the engagements which our god-
fathers and god-mothers are said to enter
into for us, the first promises that we
should forsake all kinds of sin whatever

SERM. (the world, the flesh, and the devil, being
 I. a phrase to that import) the second, that we should believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and the third, that we should obey God's holy will; which we may in a great measure, though not perhaps entirely, learn from the commandments.— Now there is certainly nothing improper in our sponsors making these vows for us, and we are indisputably bound to observe them; and, for the same plain reason, they are so greatly for own good; for, by the transgression or neglect of them, we shall draw on ourselves God's indignation, and be everlastingly punished in the life to come.

I am now to consider the apostle's creed, as it is called, all the articles of which my god-fathers and god-mothers promised I should believe. The first article requires my assent to this truth—that there is an Almighty God, the Father, and maker of
 heaven

heaven and earth; this is evident from the **SERM.**
existence of myself and every thing around 
me, from the order and regularity with
which the universe is conducted, and from
the common consent and universal agree-
ment of all mankind. Who makes the sun
to rise and to set, the moon and the planets
to perform their stated rounds, the seasons
to return at regular periods, the grain
which is buried in the earth uniformly to
revive and to grow up, but some almighty
superintending cause—which is God? We
are next called on to believe in Jesus Christ
his only Son our Lord, who was conceived
by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin
Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was
crucified, dead and buried. • Of the truth of
all this, we have the clearest testimony:—
about eighteen hundred years ago, a great
personage, called Jesus Christ, was born
of a pure virgin, among the Jews; he de-
clared that he was sent from God, and that

SERM. he was God's only Son: and he confirmed
I. the truth of those declarations by the wisdom of his instructions, and by the many wonderful works which he performed. The Jews, through envy and malice, and fearing that the religion which he taught was to be erected on the ruin of theirs, falsely accused and crucified him, at the time Pontius Pilate was their governor, on the day which we now keep and call Good Friday; and, when they perceived that he was dead, he was taken from the cross and buried in a new sepulchre; a large stone was rolled at the mouth of it, and a guard of armed soldiers placed before it, lest his disciples should come in the night and steal him away.

The creed next asserts that—"he descended into hell."—Whatever is meant by this, I think we may be certain that it is not the place of torment, which usually goes by that name; it possibly means that
place

place where the souls of the dead reside SERM.
during their separation from the body, be- I.
tween the times of death and judgment;
but this I do not think material for us to
inquire into: what follows, is indeed im-
portant—" that he arose again the third
" day;" because it is an earnest that *we*
also shall in like manner be raised from
the grave, and live. That it was really
himself, and not an apparition which de-
ceived them, he clearly proved, by con-
descendingly permitting his disciples to
handle him, and by eating and drinking as
he had done before his death; he remained
on earth and shewed himself to large num-
bers during forty days. The story of his
body being stolen by his disciples (which
the Jews pretended) is too improbable to
gain credit with any person of sense and
candour. He died then, and was buried
on the Friday, and rose again on the day
which we now celebrate as Easter Sunday.

" He

SERM. "He ascended into heaven:" this he did
I. in the sight of many of his followers, after
having conversed with them, as I have just
observed, during forty days, and given
them a commission to preach the gospel
to every creature.

He now sits at the right hand of God,
the place of highest honour in heaven,
where he continually presents our prayers,
and makes intercession for us, and from
whence he shall come in great pomp and
majesty, surrounded by myriads of angels,
to recompense according to their deeds,
both the multitudes which during all the
ages of the world have died, and those
whom at his coming he shall find alive.
The creed next calls on us to "believe in
"the Holy Ghost," who is the third per-
son in the blessed Trinity, by whose inspi-
ration the prophets spake, and the apostles
did miracles; who is the author of all the
good thoughts which arise in our minds,
who

who sanctifies and makes holy all righteous persons. SERM.
I.

But let me caution you against imagining that this divine being will take up his abode with you, without any efforts on your parts : you may indeed be sure, if you earnestly pray for his assistance, and sincerely endeavour to deserve it, that it will not be withheld from you ; but then your own labours must be as strenuously exerted, as if all depended (as in fact it does) on yourselves. We next declare our belief “ in the holy catholic church “ and the communion of saints ;” it is not perhaps very clear, now, what is precisely meant by these, but probably they may be best explained together in this manner,—we believe that the true church of Christ is made up of all sincere Christians, of what nation or sect soever, and that all such are and shall be partakers of the benefits and privileges of the gospel.

The

SERM.

I.

The next article in the belief, to which we are called on to give our assent, is, "the forgiveness of sins." Before Jesus Christ came into the world, men had certainly some hope of their offences being pardoned, which arose probably from the general goodness of God, from his delay of punishment, and from the tendency in human nature to expect what we greatly wish; but this hope by no means amounted to that full assurance of pardon, which was necessary to make the considerate in any degree easy under the sense of their sins, and to inspire them with ardour in the work of their reformation. Jesus Christ at length came, preaching repentance and remission of sins; which I understand to mean, that if at any time of a man's life he is sincerely sorry that he has offended God, most heartily prays to be forgiven, and resolves steadily to be guilty no more, but to be religious and virtuous in future; and

and if he adheres to his resolutions, notwithstanding all his former transgressions, he will meet not only with mercy but with favour. This is a grand privilege; but let no one be tempted to abuse it; let no one sin in expectation, and, as he thinks, with intention, of amendment; of all difficult things to break through, bad habits are the most difficult. On account of his presumption, likewise, God may hereafter refuse him assistance, and then all his own endeavours will avail nothing; besides, no one can be certain that he shall live another day, and if he dies in his sins, he knows the consequence; let us not, therefore, trust to futurity, but do what we know to be so necessary, immediately. Great is the salvation which is offered us; how shall we escape, if we neglect it!

Now follows our profession that we believe in "the resurrection of the body."—Of the truth of this the scriptures expressly

SERM.

I.

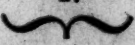
SERM. I expressly inform us ; at the last day our
 bodies will be raised from the grave, at the sound of the trump of the archangel, they will be united again with our souls, and we shall live. If you ask me, how it is possible that the flesh, part of which has been eaten by worms, part blown about in dust by the four winds, that of some men consumed by fire, and of others buried in the ocean ; if you ask me how it is possible that all these scattered fragments and particles can be collected and joined together,—I ask you, in return, whether it be not as easy for God to do this, as it was for him to form man from the dust at his first creation ? To revive a dead man appears to require no greater exertion of power than originally to have made him. You may form some idea of the possibility of our being revived again, by what you experience every year :—“ That which
“ thou sowest is not quickened, except it
“ die ;”

“ die ;” the grain you place in the earth SERM.
first rots, and is afterwards enlivened, and I.
arises, clothed with a beautiful verdure.
And if God so clothe the grass of the field,
how much more shall he clothe your mortal
bodies with a glorious immortality !—
It seems probable that men will be first
revived in the same bodies in which they
died, but that an instant change will take
place :—“ This corruptible will put on in-
“ corruption, and this mortal will put on
“ immortality.”—Christ gave a specimen
of the nature of the change our bodies are
to undergo, to Peter, James, and John,
when he was transfigured on the mount ;
he appeared all glorious, his face shone like
the sun, and his raiment became white as
snow. Such a change will take place with
respect to the righteous at the resurrec-
tion ; for St. Paul tells us, that “ Christ
“ will change our vile body, that it may
“ be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

You

SERM. ^{I.} You will observe, that when this glorious change in the bodies of men at the resurrection is spoken of, it can only be meant of the bodies of the virtuous, although it be mentioned in general terms,—St. Paul being desirous of taking for granted, that all those to whom he writes would be in that number. The bodies of the wicked will certainly be raised at the same time, but whether they will undergo any change, is uncertain; but it seems probable, that as many of the crimes of the wicked have arisen from their bodies, that they shall, together with their souls, share in the eternity of punishment which has been denounced.

The last article in the creed is our profession of belief in “the life everlasting.”—Life is often put in scripture for happiness, and it is possible may mean so here. I believe, that if I am pious and virtuous in this world, I shall be for ever happy in
the

the next ; or probably it may have a more SERM.
I.
extensive signification, that of existence, 
and may mean, not only the everlasting
bliss of the righteous, but the everlasting
misery of the wicked : in either case our
belief is supported by scripture, which as-
sures us, in various places, that as the re-
ligious and good man shall be eternally
happy in the presence of God, so the pro-
fane and immoral man shall, for the same
endless time, undergo the most terrible
disgrace and torment. Such are the great
truths to which we are called on to give
our assent ; it is, however, to little purpose
that we obey the call, unless we join to a
sound faith, a good life and conversation :
what this chiefly consists in we may learn
from the commandments, to which I
should now pass ; but this I must defer to
a future opportunity.

the heart; and probably a very large number
 extensive suffering on the part of the
 and have been not only the everlast-
 bliss of the righteous, but the everlast-
 misery of the wicked. In either case our
 belief is supported by a power which has
 series us, in various places, and by the
 light and good will still be visible
 happy in the presence of God as the
 fine and innermost of all the
 endless state, through the most terrible
 distance and formal. Such are the
 things to which we are called, and
 present; it is necessary for the
 that we once the call which we have
 sound with a good life, and a
 what this chiefly consists in, we have
 from the commandments, to which
 should now turn; but that I may
 a future opportunity.

SERMON II.

ON THE CATECHISM.

PROV. xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and
when he is old he will not depart from it.*

IN the former part of the sixth chapter of SERM.
Exodus, are related the orders which the II.
children of Israel received to attend the
Lord upon Mount Sinai, and the solemn
preparations which they were directed to
make for that awful meeting. After that
the historian proceeds in this manner:
“ And it came to pass on the third day
“ (the day appointed for God’s descent)

SERM. " in the morning, that there were thunders

II.

" and lightnings, and thick clouds upon

" the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet

" exceeding loud, so that all the people

" that was in the camp trembled. And

" Moses brought forth the people out of the

" camp to meet with God, and they stood

" at the bottom of the Mount. And

" Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke,

" because the Lord descended upon it in

" fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as

" the smoke of a furnace; and the whole

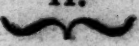
" Mount quaked greatly. And when the

" voice of the trumpet sounded long, and

" waxed louder and louder, Moses spake,

" and God answered him by a voice."

Moses then receives orders to charge the people not to presume to ascend the Mount: and after that, God delivered the ten commandments, as we find them in the xxth chapter. You observe that this delivery was originally made to the people

ple of Israel, and undoubtedly the ten SERM.
II.
commandments were chiefly intended for 
their use. "I am the Lord thy God (says
"the Almighty) which have brought thee
"out of the land of Egypt, out of the
"house of slavery." This is applicable to
them only, and relates to their miraculous
escape from the oppression of Pharoah.—
But when we consider the prodigious so-
lemnity with which these ten command-
ments were uttered by God's own mouth,
and that they were afterwards written with
his own finger; and when we reflect, be-
sides, on their intrinsic excellency, that
they contain in them the great heads of
duty both towards God and man; and when
we observe the veneration which Christians
of all ages have paid to them, we cannot
but perceive that they are deserving of all
our attention, respect, and obedience.

The first commandment is directed
against those numerous objects of wor-
ship,

SERM. ship, to which the nations, who lived in
II. and round about the country which the
Jews were going to inhabit, paid their ignorant and wicked adorations;—the sun, the moon, the stars, stocks, stones, animals, and deceased men, they either joined with the Supreme Being, or worshipped instead of him. To keep the people of Israel from this absurdity and wickedness, God says to them, “Thou shalt have none other Gods but me.”—I allow neither of substitute nor partner, to me only shall you offer up your prayers, praises, and adorations. We Christians are, I hope, in no danger of offending against this law, in the same manner as the nations above-mentioned, but we may break it in other instances, and incur no small portion of guilt for so doing. We may, and alas! too many of us do, give a preference to the pleasures, honours, riches of this world, above God: now when we do this they are
to

to us in the place of gods; it is them SERM.
II.
which we love with all our hearts, with 
all our mind, with all our soul, and with
all our strength; it is them which we
worship; it is in them that we trust, and,
too often, it is them which we truly serve
all the days of our life. Now, when this
is the case, we certainly violate the first
commandment: those who dedicate their
whole time, and set their whole affections
either on worldly honours or pleasures, are
(as the apostle expressly tells us, with res-
pect to the covetous) Idolaters. "Thou
" shalt have none other gods but me."
The precept is delivered in negative terms,
but it has a positive meaning; we are *not*
only required by it *not* to worship what is
not God, but we are required heartily to
worship what *is* God.

As Protestants we are, I trust, in little
danger of infringing the prohibition con-
tained in the second commandment; but

SERM. there are one sect of Christians, the Ro-
 II. man Catholics, who appear to infringe it
 grievously; they certainly make to them-
 selves images, and bow down before them.
 Some parts, however, of this command-
 ment deserve our notice: God says—"I
 " am a jealous God;" i.e. 'I am very ten-
 ' der of my honour; I bear neither partner
 ' nor competitor in those duties which pro-
 ' perly belong to me.' This jealousy does
 not only imply a strong dislike, but a fierce
 displeasure, against the breakers of this
 law: what reason, then, is there to guard
 against it! "Who can stand in God's sight
 "when he is angry!" Who can support
 the effects of his displeasure!

The conclusion of this commandment
 is remarkable; God represents himself as
 "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the
 children unto the third and fourth gene-
 ration of them that hate him, and shewing
 mercy unto thousands in them that love
 him

him and keep his commandments." Men have usually a great affection for their posterity, and a great anxiety about them, and therefore, the more to deter them from gross sins, God affirms here that he will not confine his rewards and punishments to the good man or sinner himself, but extend them likewise to his descendants. This seems particular, perhaps, and almost unaccountable, but yet in fact it is what is constantly happening. Do we not every day see children, and even children's children, enjoying the rewards of their ancestors' prudence and virtues, or suffering grievously in consequence of their ancestors' crimes? This, indeed, is the course of nature; but remember, that the course of nature is under the direction of God. Observe, however, the difference between God's proceeding in the way of severity and in the way of favour! He only threatens to visit the iniquities of disobedient parents on the third
and

SERM.

II.

SERM. and fourth generation of their children, but
II. sheweth mercy unto a thousand descents
of the posterity of them who love and obey
him.

The third commandment forbids us to
take God's name in vain ; that is, never to
mention it but on serious occasions :—

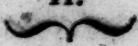
“ The Lord will not hold him guiltless
“ that taketh his name in vain ; ”—a strong
expression, which implies, that he will look
on him as exceedingly guilty. This com-

mandment certainly extends to all kinds of
swearing and cursing whatever. And here

I must express my wonder that there are
so many men, who incur such great por-
tions of guilt on such slight temptations !

When the robber tells you he was induced
to take away his neighbour's goods, to fur-
nish himself with the necessities or lux-
uries of life,—when the drunkard alleges,
in excuse for his failing, the delight which
he finds in intemperance and jollity,—

though

though their wickedness is great, we are SERM.
II.
able to form an idea of the motive which 
incites them to it; but what can we assign as a motive to the common swearer? He cannot hope to make himself richer by swearing, nor wiser, nor more esteemed; it will gratify none of his appetites or passions: there is no wit in it, nor is there any invention; for the most stupid may arrive at the same degree of perfection in it as the most ingenious. It is shocking to every pious ear, and disgusting to every liberal mind: and though they who practise it are guilty of dreadful wickedness, I know no one end that it can possibly answer to them. The pretence that what they say is more attended to on this account, is too ridiculous to deserve a serious reply; besides, if it were true, I beg you to reflect, whether such attention would be worth purchasing at the expence of your eternal salvation.

The

SERM.

II.

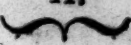
~ exact observance of the Sabbath ; all kinds of labour were prohibited to the Jews on that day. We are not so strictly bound, but that we may attend, as occasion demands, to works of absolute necessity : let us not, however, abuse this Christian liberty, by carrying it too far ; let the hours of divine service in particular be esteemed sacred ; and let us, from charity and humanity, as well as reverence to God's laws, grant every reasonable and possible remission from their labours to those who depend upon us. The poorer part of mankind, forced to incessant and uninterrupted toil, to procure themselves the necessaries of life, have little time, during six days in the week, for the consideration of religious subjects ; and if they perform their morning and their evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, it is all, perhaps, which they are able to do : but on Sunday, if they
be

be not prevented by hard or inconsiderate masters, they have opportunity as well as leisure to think of another world; to assemble themselves together with their brethren to worship their God, and to be instructed in their duty, and reminded of a day of judgment and a world to come.—
Permit me to call on those who have dependants under them, to do all in their power to render this excellent institution of the Sabbath effective and useful: not only to free, as much as possible, from their usual employments, those who live under the same roof with them, but to make those arrangements and settlements, with all who depend upon them, before the Lord's Day, which, when they are delayed till then, are gladly seized by the idle as an excuse for not attending public worship; while they are sincerely lamented by the well-disposed, as the real cause of their absence. The accounts of the poor are
soon

SERM.

II.

SERM. soon settled, the recompence of their la-
II. bours for the week past is not long in ad-
justing. Let it not then vexatiously be
delayed; nor occupy with earthly cares
those hours which ought to be solely de-
voted to God. Consider the inestimable
importance, to the poor, of Sunday well
employed; consider that the certain con-
sequence of their time being taken up, on
that day, with earthly cares, must be total
irreligion. Reflect how shocked you will
be, and how heavy will be your account, if
any of your dependants should plead at the
last audit—‘ But for my master’s inconsi-
‘ deration I should have been regular at
‘ church, should have worshipped my God,
‘ and have learnt and practised my duty!’
Assembling on the Lord’s Day, to serve
the Almighty, together with his brethren,
is no light part of a Christian’s duty,
or which he is in any degree at liberty to
omit. Too many bad people, I confess,
do

do come to church ; but let it be remem- SERM.
bered, at the same time, that none of the II.
good stay away. 

I shall in my next discourse proceed to
the commandments of the second table,
which contains the heads of our duty to-
wards our neighbour.

SERMON

ho come to church; but let it be temperate SERMON

parted, at the same time, that none of the

good stay away.

I shall in my next discourse proceed to

the commandments of the second table,

which contains the heads of our duty to-

wards our neighbour.

SERMON

SERMON III.

ON THE CATECHISM.

PROV. xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and
when he is old he will not depart from it.*

IN my explanation of the catechism I have SERM.
III.
already gone through with the command-
ments of the first table; I now proceed to
consider those of the second. These open
with the injunction to honour our father
and mother; and surely, in the regulation
of our conduct towards each other, no pre-
cept could with greater propriety take the
lead: after that entire and boundless obe-
dience

VOL. II.

D

SERM. dience due from all to God, the next degree
III. of respect and reverence is due from children to their parents.

For this you have the divine express command, with the promise of a reward annexed to it,—“Thy days shall be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” This indeed chiefly respected the Jews, and might either hold forth length of days as a reward to the dutiful, individually; or might promise the long possession of the land of Canaan to the whole nation, if this precept were observed, in general: but there is no reason to doubt but that Christians also, who conscientiously honour their parents, may reasonably look for a temporal recompence to their obedience. In the first place, St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, setting before them this commandment, insists on the promise annexed to it; and secondly, dutiful children are, according to the common course of

of things, likely to prosper and do well in SERM.
the world. The whole of life is apt to take III.
its colour from the employment of our youth, and that employment of it, which is most agreeable to our parents, is commonly the most to our own advantage.— I need not mention motives of gratitude, they are too obvious; he, who is ill behaved and cruel to the authors of his being, the fosterers of his childhood, to whom will he be kind? he, who is negligent of this first and great duty, of what other can we expect that he will be mindful?

The sixth commandment forbids murder. The atrociousness of this crime is so great, and it is so certainly followed by the punishment of death from the laws of our country, that there is no necessity to dwell on it. The remonstrances or warnings of the preacher can have little effect on him who can harbour in his breast any idea of it; let us, however, devoutly pray against,

D 2

and

SERM. and carefully avoid, those unruly passions,
III.  envy, hatred, and malice, and all kinds of uncharitableness, which are the usual steps that lead to it.

Adultery is prohibited by the seventh commandment. By many civilized nations this crime was punished with death, and even by the divine law which was given to the Jews, and that to both the parties concerned in it, and surely very deservedly; for there is no offence by which the order of society is more disturbed, none by which the peace of individuals is more cruelly wounded. On the side of the married person there is perjury added to impurity, and in every case there is the greatest immorality and the basest selfishness. What can shew a more total want of generosity than, for a transient satisfaction to ourselves, to destroy the peace of a fellow-creature — perhaps of a friend — for his whole life! The punishment among us is
not

not now so great, at least not by the law; SERM.
III.
but let us not be deceived; the guilt is
still the same, and the penalty is only de-
layed, to be exacted with greater severity
by the hand of God. I must just observe
that this commandment has been judged
to comprise every deviation from chastity
whatever; nor is the Christian law, which
threatens adultery, less severe against
every other species of impurity—"Whore-
mongers and adulterers God will judge."

In the eighth commandment, the prohi-
bition of all kinds of injustice, by which the
property of another is invaded, is com-
prised; not only he who robs me openly
on the highway, or who breaks into my
dwelling and bears off my goods, but he
who, in any other less notorious and ob-
servable manner, defrauds me, is guilty of
disobeying this precept against stealing.—
The great man, who avails himself of su-
perior power to deprive me of my right,

SERM. and sets me at defiance, because I have not
III.  the means of applying to the law for protection ; the worldly wise man, who takes advantage of superior cunning to overreach me in our bargains ; and the tradesman, who makes improper profits, either by adulterating the commodity in which he deals, by a deficiency in his weights and measures, or by any other manner of injustice, are all of them no less guilty of a breach of the eighth commandment, than the highwayman or the house-breaker.

When understood in this extensive manner, which it certainly ought to be, it is to be feared that there are too many who would be shocked at the name of stealing, who are too intimate with the offence.

As the sixth commandment aims to guard our life, and the eighth our property, the ninth is intended for the preservation of our characters—"Thou shalt not bear
"false witness against thy neighbour."—

The

The most heinous violation of this pre-
cept is that of those infamous persons
who, in a court of justice, and with the
solemnity of an oath, assert what they
know to be untrue, against an innocent
man, and bring perhaps his life, perhaps
his property, but certainly his good name,
into danger. This is a crime of so deep
a dye, that I trust there is no need to warn
any of my present audience against it:
the commandment is, however, too often
transgressed, even in the best regulated
societies, in less eminent degrees;—and
such transgressions are the source of very
much of the unhappiness of social life.

Next to his guilt, who swears publicly
to my prejudice what he knows to be false,
is that of him who affirms the same fal-
sity in private, with a design to traduce
my reputation. It is something, that the
forms of justice are wanting—it is some-
thing, that Almighty God is not imme-

SERM. diately. affronted by solemn appeal;—but,
 III.
 ~~~~~ in every other respect, the injury to the party defamed is often as great, and the stroke as wounding, as that which is given by the hand of the executioner. There are many other ways of infringing this commandment, where the degree of criminality, though still inferior, is yet great; as when we speak ill of others on suspicion only—on slight grounds—or on vague report—or when we do it unnecessarily—or take a pleasure in it—or do not speak in their defence, when we hear them unjustly or maliciously attacked. It is, besides, ungenerous and unjust—ungenerous, to sport with the characters of our fellow-creatures, on which their reception in the world, and sometimes their bread, depends—unjust, because it is not doing unto them as we would wish them to do unto us.

The laws of the last table conclude with  
 “Thou shalt not covet.”—The actual invasion



vasion of the property of another, having SERM.  
III.  
been already prohibited,—the mere desire  
to possess it, is now forbidden; and we  
should set ourselves assiduously to obey it,  
whether we consider our own happiness,  
our duty towards our neighbour, or towards  
God.

For, first, the contrary temper to what  
is here enjoined, makes a man miserable;  
as, if he once gives free scope to his de-  
sires, he is never likely to be satisfied;  
success will but add fuel to the flame—the  
more objects of his wishes he gains, the  
more ardent he will still be in pursuing  
others—and content will be, for ever, a  
stranger to his breast.

Secondly, it is an unjust temper, pro-  
bably in itself, since we are not far from  
hating the man whom we envy, and for  
whose possessions we greatly long—and  
almost certainly in its effects, for he will  
not, when a convenient opportunity offers,  
long

SERM. long scrupulously restrain his hands from  
III. the property of another, in the hope of  
possessing which, he permits his heart to  
riot uncontrolled.

Lastly, it is an irreligious temper, since  
it implies a discontent with God's dispensations towards us; and, as it usually engrosses the whole heart and affections, it banishes all thoughts of piety and another world.

Such are the celebrated laws of the two tables—laws which, I have before observed, were spoken by God's mouth, and written with his finger—you perceive how excellent they are in themselves, and how proper for man to obey them.—Let us, then, devoutly offer up our prayers, that they may all be deeply engraven on the fleshly tablet of our hearts!

SERMON

## SERMON IV.

### ON THE CATECHISM

LUKE xi. 1.

*One of his disciples said unto him, Lord,  
teach us to pray.*

IN my last discourse on the catechism, SERM.  
IV.  
I concluded my explanation of the ten commandments. From these, we are informed that we learn our duty towards God, and our duty towards our neighbour; and, in the answers to the two following questions, these duties are set down at large: but I have already, in my remarks on the commandments, anticipated the chief of  
what



SERM. what I could say on them ; and as to those  
IV. points on which I have not spoken, they  
are expressed, in the catechism itself, in so  
clear a manner, that there is no necessity  
for me to dwell on them.

To understand, and to obey the com-  
mandments, should be the study and the  
endeavour of our whole lives ; but our  
own exertions will not do alone ; if God  
does not grant his assistance to them,  
however strenuous they may be, they will  
be vain :—to obtain, therefore, this assist-  
ance, it is our duty, at all times, to call for  
it by attentive and fervent prayer. I pro-  
ceed, then, to take into consideration that  
most perfect form which was composed  
by our Lord, at the request of his disciples,  
and is called by his name—the Lord's  
Prayer. Of all the general forms of ad-  
dress to the Supreme Being, which are ex-  
tant, it is undoubtedly at the same time  
the most rational and the most devout ; so  
that

that (as it has been well said\*) whether we have an eye to the preaching or the praying of our Redeemer, the observation is equally just—"That never man spake like this man."

SERM.  
IV.  
~~~~~

The Lord's prayer contains six distinct petitions, besides the address at the beginning, and what is called the doxology, at the conclusion. The address is concise, but replete with meaning—"Our Father, "which art in heaven." It is observable, that we are not directed to say my Father, but our Father, which seems designed to remind us, first, of the vast authority and dominion of God, extending over all mankind—and, secondly, of the relationship which we bear to each other, he being the common parent of us all—and, consequently, of the obligation under which we lie, to cultivate and entertain an universal affection and good will.

* Ogden.

SERM.

IV.

are permitted to make use, reminds us of our being allied to him, in many respects—by nature, for he created us, and that after his own image—by providence, for he constantly preserves and protects us—by grace, for he renews us again, according to his image, after that, by Adam's fall and our own manifold iniquities, we have defaced and destroyed the resemblance—every way he is our Creator and Father. There is something, likewise, attractive and winning in the title—God, or Lord, imply such perfection, and such super-eminent authority, that, conscious as we must be of our meanness and unworthiness, we might be discouraged in our approaches to him; but the name of Father supports and emboldens. What earthly parent is there, who does not love and desire all manner of good for his offspring? “And
“ if men, being evil, do give good gifts
“ unto

“ unto their children, how much more SERM.
“ will our Father, who is in heaven, give IV.
“ good things to them that ask him ! ”—

“ Which art in heaven.” God is substantially present every where alike ; but he does not every where equally discover himself, nor does he display every where, with equal splendour, the beams of his glorious majesty. The scripture frequently mentions a place of his special residence ; here is his royal court, here his imperial throne, and here he is attended upon by saints and angels. This place is called heaven, and sometimes the highest heavens, and by his presence here God is described, both to distinguish him from other earthly parents, and to increase our reverence towards him, when we bring to mind his super-eminent glory and majesty.

The first petition is “ Hallowed or sanctified be thy name.” God’s name means himself, and when we pray that it may be
hal-

SERM.

IV.

hallowed or sanctified, we mean to ask that all mankind may make a distinction, observe a distance between God and other things, and that they may give to him the most decided and unrivalled preference: we mean to request of the Almighty to this effect—‘Mayest thou every where
‘be had in the highest veneration! May
‘all honour, praise, and service be rendered unto thee by men, and by us, who
‘are now addressing thee, in particular!’
“Thy kingdom come,” is the second petition. This would be more justly and intelligibly translated, if it were—‘Thy
‘reign come.’ The profession of pure Christianity is in the scriptures constantly called the reign of God. The petition here used seems more immediately to respect the state of things at the time when Christ taught this prayer to his disciples: they were instructed here to desire that the gospel might be speedily and effectually

ally extended all over the earth; then in SERM.
figurative language would commence the V.
reign of God!

There is but too much reason, however, for us at this day to continue the petition, when we recollect that a very large part of the world is not yet converted to Christianity, and that, even of those who do call themselves Christians, too many are such only in name, and that men in general are far, very far distant from the purity which the gospel enjoins. The complete reign of God implies, that the whole globe should be Christians, and such Christians as our Master commands. This is a state of things which possibly may never entirely arrive; but we ought to pray, and may hope that we are continually making nearer approaches to it. Such prayers, I am sure, are our duty, and I think there are grounds for such hopes.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in
“heaven,” is the third petition. Every
VOL. II. E decree

SERM.
IV.

decree of the Almighty is unquestionably received with the utmost complacency and the most entire satisfaction, by those pious and loyal spirits who surround his throne, and they are certainly ever prompt and eager to shew the most perfect obedience to his commands: such complacency and satisfaction in all events, and such obedience to all the divine commands, we in this petition desire may be exhibited by mankind. May we as fully acquiesce in all thou doest, and as exactly obey all thou enjoimest, as the blessed angels!

The fourth petition is—"Give us this day our daily bread." This is well paraphrased in the catechism itself:—"I pray unto God that he will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies." Two explanations are given of this petition; it probably comprises both; either the bread of the time to come, that is, the happiness of futurity, or our maintenance in this present life. The first respects

spects our souls, and the latter our bodies. **S E R M.**

IV.

Observe the modesty of the petition as relating to earthly things, and be careful in all your other prayers to conform to it. It asks not for riches, elegancy, splendour; but for bread; and though under the term bread is, doubtless, comprehended all necessities, yet they are clearly necessities alone, not superfluities. Nor do we ask even for necessities, to make us so far beforehand that we should be independent of God; but, we say, "Give us this day our daily bread;" "grant us what may suffice for our present support; for the rest we trust cheerfully to thy providence; we cast all our care upon thee, in full knowledge and confidence that thou carest for us."

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," is the fifth petition. The first step towards obtaining forgiveness of our sins, is to

SERM. be sensible of them and to confess them.

IV.

“ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Now this petition implies confession, inasmuch as by the very asking of forgiveness of sins, we own that we have been sinners; we, however, annex a condition, on which we apply for this forgiveness, which is, that we ourselves pardon those who have in any way offended against us. Let us then be very careful; when we approach the throne of mercy, to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts; to wish no ill to any of our fellow-creatures, however they may have provoked us, but to be ready on any opportunity to do them all service. “ If you forgive to men their trespasses (says our Saviour) your heavenly father will also forgive you.” The reverse is likewise true. “ Lead

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” is the last petition; for I think, though it consists of two clauses, it may be considered as one petition. I have seen these words changed for others, which are in my opinion more agreeable to the sense of the original language. “Abandon us not to temptation, but preserve us from evil.” The phrase, “lead us not into temptation,” seems to imply, that we believe God to be the author of it, which he certainly never is of the sort of temptation here intended: whereas ‘abandon us not, nor permit us to go into temptation,’ steers clear of this seeming impropriety. The word, which is translated *deliver*, means more than that—it means *preserve*, by which may be understood, not merely ‘free us from the evils into which we have fallen, but prevent us from falling into any evils at all.’ Temptation is of two kinds; one is sent to give the vir-

SERM.

IV.

SERM.

IV.

tuous an opportunity of displaying their good qualities: such was that of Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his son; such were those into which the early Christians fell, when they were so severely persecuted; and such are those which good men now experience, when they meet with vexations and afflictions, and pass victoriously through them. The other sort of temptations are those occasions of sin, which but too often occur, that are by their own violence, and the weakness of those to whose lot they fall, insurmountable. It is obvious that they are these latter against which we pray, as these only are prejudicial to us, the former tending to the glory of God and the good of our own souls. "Preserve us from evil:"—that greatest of all evils, Sin, and the consequences of sin, the anger of God, are here principally intended: but yet, in an inferior degree, it is certainly allowable to have

have in our eye a preservation from temporal evils; but this must be accompanied with the filial submission of our blessed Saviour to the disposal of the Almighty—
“ Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”

SERM.
IV.

The concluding clause of the Lord's Prayer is called the Doxology, the meaning of which is, a form of ascribing glory to God:—“ For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.” ‘ Thou hast a perpetual and immoveable authority, by which at all times thou directest and governest all things, wherefore we profess to rely on thee alone, and have a full confidence in thee in all our wants; thine is the glory; all honour and reverence, all love and thankfulness, are due unto thee, as in the beginning, so at this present time, and will be to all eternity.’

SERM.

IV.

Having thus gone through with each article of the Lord's Prayer separately, I shall conclude with taking a more connected view of it, by presenting you with it in a short paraphrase.

O thou, the great creator and preserver of me and all the rest of the universe, who art enthroned in majesty above all height, and dwellest in light which no eye can approach; mayest thou be honoured by all thy innumerable creatures, as thy unspeakable greatness requires! may their minds be impressed with just sentiments of thy wisdom, goodness, and omnipotence!

"Thy kingdom come." Oh! hasten the period, when the religion which thou hast graciously revealed to us by thine only begotten son, may be professed all over the world in its original purity, and may obtain such an influence over the hearts and lives of all its votaries, that thy will may be submitted to, and performed

formed on earth as it is in heaven! that we, as far as the weakness of humanity will allow, may as exactly be guided by thy good pleasure as the blessed angels! SERM.
IV.

“ Give us this day our daily bread.”

During our passage through this transitory state, do thou, who gave us life, give us the means of supporting it; we pray not for superfluities to consume on our own lusts, nor do we too anxiously look forward into futurity; we will be satisfied with a moderate present provision, nor have we the foolish desire to be independent of thee.

“ Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” Remember that we are but dust, and, on our sorrow and amendment, pardon us all in which we have offended; be not extreme to mark what we have done amiss. And as thou hast justly made it a condition of obtaining mercy from thee, that we shew mercy

SERM.
IV.

mercy to our brethren, afford us thy assistance to conquer any imperfections in our temper; subdue in us all tendency towards malice and resentment; and grant that our benevolence may be universal, and without exception!

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Permit us not to fall a sacrifice to the snares of the world, the allurements of the flesh, or the artifices of the devil; let us not be tempted above what we are able to bear; in every age, in every station, in every change of circumstances, surround us with the shield of thy all-powerful protection! In prosperity, and in distress, in health, and in sickness, let thy holy spirit guard us from the approach of spiritual evil; and when we arrive at the closing scene of our earthly pilgrimage, still be thou near to aid and support us; suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from

from thee ; nor let thy care of us conclude **SERM.**
with this mortal life, but in the day of **IV.**
judgment also, of thy great mercy, good
Lord, deliver us ! Save us from the bitter
pains of eternal death, and receive us into
the happy mansions of saints and angels.
These petitions we humbly offer to the
throne of thy grace, in full confidence both
of thy mercy and omnipotence ; thou who
spake and it was done, commanded and it
was made fast, all that we can ask or want,
thou canst abundantly confer on us ; for
boundless and uncontrolable is thy power
and dominion, and to thy glory and king-
dom there is no end !

SERMON

described: now let thy care of us coincide
 with this mortal life but in the day of
 judgment also of thy great mercy, good
 Lord deliver us. Save us from the bitter
 pains of eternal death and receive us into
 the happy mansions of saints and angels.
 These petitions we humbly offer to the
 throne of thy grace: in full confidence both
 of thy mercy and own potency: thou who
 alone and it was done, commanded and it
 was made fast. All that we can ask or want
 thou canst bestow. Grant on us: thy
 power and goodness is in thy power
 and thy goodness and to thy glory and king-
 dom mine is a

SERMON V.

ON THE CATECHISM.

ST. JOHN xiii. 35.

*By this shall all men know that ye are my
disciples.*

I AM now arrived at my concluding dis-
course on the catechism; it will be taken
up with explaining the two sacraments;
those peculiar rites of the Christian reli-
gion, ordained by Christ himself, as the dis-
tinguishing marks by which his disciples
were to be known. In doing this, I shall
observe the method of the catechism it-
self, and, first, explain the nature and
meaning of a sacrament in general; 2dly,
I shall consider the sacrament of baptism;
and 3dly, that of the Lord's supper.

SERM.
V.

“ How

SERM. — "How many sacraments hath Christ or-

V.

“dained in his church?” In the answer to this first question, we are told that there are “two sacraments only, as generally necessary to salvation.” The number is mentioned, because in the church of Rome they observe several others, for which we Protestants affirm there is no foundation in the scriptures. The word ‘generally’ is inserted from a charitable motive; it means that though, for the most part, the observance of these sacraments can alone insure to us salvation, yet in cases, where from ignorance or want of opportunity, they have been neglected, that God may pass over and pardon the omission.

We are next told that the meaning of the word sacrament is, “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us
“there-

"thereof." That is, a sacrament is made SERM.
V.
up of an outward part and an inward part; something which is visible to us, and something which is invisible; the former is some action in which we partake, which is a sign, token, or representation of the latter; this latter is some grace or favour from heaven, and the outward action in which we partake, is a means of acquiring this grace or favour, and a pledge to assure us that we shall acquire it. Now consider this explanation of a sacrament in general, with respect to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. In baptism, water is the outward sign; the purification of our hearts, the inward grace: do you perceive the resemblance? as your bodies are made clean by water, so baptism, by which you are made Christians, cleanses and purifies your minds. It was also ordained by Christ himself; you remember his command to his apostles, just before

SERM. before his ascension into heaven.—“Go ye
 V. “into the world, and preach the gospel to
 “every creature, baptising them in the
 “name of the Father, and of the Son, and
 “of the Holy Ghost.” In all covenants,
 you know, there are conditions made by
 each party; the gospel is a gracious cove-
 nant between God and man: on our part,
 the conditions are faith and obedience; on
 God’s part, forgiveness of sins, and eter-
 nal life. Now by the sacrament of bap-
 tism, we become entitled to these benefits,
 and it is a seal or pledge of God’s, that if
 we observe the conditions promised by our-
 selves, or our sureties, he will not fail to
 bestow them on us.

Let us now try the above explanation of
 a sacrament, with respect to the Lord’s
 Supper. Here the outward visible sign
 is bread and wine; the inward spiritual
 grace, the strengthening and refreshing of
 our souls. As bread and wine nourish
 and

and support the body, so the celebration of ^{SERM.}
the sufferings and death of Christ does, or ^{V.}
ought to, excite in us a quick sense of gratitude for what he has done for us; to animate us to a closer attachment to him; to create in us a stronger abhorrence of sin, and affection for virtue; and by this means to nourish and support our souls. It was likewise ordained by Christ himself: this was done immediately before his death, in the presence of all the apostles; he himself partook of it with them, and left it as his dying request and command, that they should continue to observe this rite in remembrance of him. It is likewise a means whereby we appropriate to ourselves the benefits of our Redeemer's death; he has thought fit to appoint such means, and, I confess, I do not see how any Christian can reasonably expect, whilst he neglects them, to attain the glorious end. As to its being a pledge to

SERM.

V.

assure us of God's mercy, consider what it represents;—the body of Christ, which was broken, and the blood of Christ, which was poured out to make atonement for our iniquities; to procure for us the pardon of our sins. What may we not expect when we are calling to mind such an amazing instance of good will to men, as this? may we not be certain, that he who withheld not from us his only son, will, with him, bestow on us all manner of good gifts? Thus, you see, baptism and the Lord's supper exactly answer to the description of a sacrament; they both contain outward and visible signs; water in the one; bread and wine in the other: these signs also represent inward spiritual graces; water represents purification from sin; and bread and wine, an increase and stability in virtue: they were likewise ordained by Christ, and are means of obtaining, and pledges that we shall obtain, certain graces and benefits.

We

We will now consider what farther is **SERM.**
said in the catechism, with respect to each ^{V.}
of them.

Of those who are baptized, we are told, there is required, "Repentance, "whereby they forsake sin; and faith, "whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament." The primitive church was extremely strict in this particular. Before Christianity was established, when persons grown to manhood offered themselves to baptism, no one was admitted till he could give proof of his sorrow for his past evil life, and till he could offer reasons for his faith in Christ; and it was afterwards expected, that he should shew his sincerity by his future virtuous and pious behaviour. But if this were the custom, and if faith and repentance are really necessary, it is a very natural question which follows, "Why "then are infants baptized, when by rea-

SERM. "son of their tender age they can give
 V. "proof of neither?" The answer is satisfactory; their god-fathers and god-mothers promise both for them, and when they come to years of discretion, they themselves are bound to perform them; and for this plain reason, because the engagements, which have been made in their names, are so greatly for their good. And we accordingly find, that the custom universally prevails of taking on ourselves, at our confirmation, those vows, which were made by our sureties at our baptism.

It now remains that I consider the Lord's supper. There is a difficulty in the catechism, with respect to this, which should not be passed over: we are told that the body and blood of Christ are "verily and
 "indeed taken, and received by the faithful." This expression sounds like the doctrine of the Papists; that the words which are said over the bread and wine by
 the

the priest, convert them into the real body SERM.
and blood of Christ! but this certainly is V.
not the sentiment of our church; by being
verily and indeed taken, we may, and ought
to understand only, that the benefits of
our Redeemer's death are truly received by
the faithful believer and worthy commu-
nicant alone. Of these benefits I have al-
ready spoken, and indeed they are so plainly
expressed in the catechism, that it is unne-
cessary to dwell on them; the 'strengthen-
'ing and refreshing of our souls by the body
'and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by
'the bread and wine.' The subject is closed
with a description of the requisites for the
worthy partaking of this sacrament, which
are said to be, "Examination of ourselves,
" whether we truly repent of our former
" sins; a stedfast purpose to lead a new
" life; a lively faith in God's mercy through
" Christ; a thankful remembrance of his
" death; and a charitable, benevolent dis-
" position towards all men."

S E R M

V.

Now these are but the ordinary duties of a Christian; and though perhaps no man performs them in the perfect manner in which he ought, yet, without aiming at the performance of them, he is equally unfit for any other religious duty, as he is for receiving the sacrament; and if he resolves not to try to make himself more fit, he might as well cast off all religion whatever. The subject is of the utmost importance; I must be excused if, in dwelling on it a little, I repeat frequently the same arguments.* Unhappy errors prevail to too great a degree with respect to this ceremony, to the very great prejudice

* Arguments and persuasions to frequent communion were enforced by the author from the pulpit, in many sermons: these, in his life-time, he took occasion to throw together in a small pamphlet, which he published under the title of "A Familiar Treatise on the Sacrament."—And it is for this reason that the 'repeated arguments,' to which allusion is made above, are not re-printed in this work, as the writer himself had given them to the world in another form.

of

of religion, and danger even of many well-disposed persons. Mankind were in a fallen state, overwhelmed with ignorance and wickedness, when Jesus Christ came down from heaven to teach and to save them. His whole life was passed in the former of these employments, and he willingly encountered a most painful and ignominious death to compass the latter. It was just before he died, that he appointed to be observed, in perpetual remembrance of him, this participation of bread and wine: 'This bread (says he) represents my body; this wine represents my blood; when you eat and drink them, think of what I have undergone for you, and of the great advantages which you have gained by it: ' "Do this in remembrance of me." Now there is nothing mysterious in this; nothing more than what all may understand: you are required to do a plain act, to shew your gratitude for the greatest in-

SERM. stance of benevolence that ever was; do
V.
you, or do you not, believe that Christ died for us, and left us this command? If you do not, there's an end of the matter; but if you do, how can you stand excused in your own eyes for refusing to comply with his so earnest request? You will not tell me it is too much trouble! what! to pass one hour in celebrating the goodness of that friend and Saviour, who spent all the hours of his life, and, lastly, sacrificed his life itself, in your service!

Besides, it is my duty to tell you that there is much reason to fear, that to those who will wilfully shut their eyes against what they ought to do in this particular, and absent themselves altogether from the Lord's table, all which he has done and suffered will have been in vain.

But you are afraid, perhaps, you will say; the threats of St. Paul, which are again repeated in the communion service, terrify
and

and alarm you; you cannot flatter your-
selves that you shall be worthy partakers
of the Lord's supper; and you therefore
think it safer wholly to abstain from it!
You are then resolved still to continue in
your sins; you are determined not to ex-
amine yourselves and repent; not to have
hope in Christ, nor to be in charity with
your brethren;—for unless this be the case,
if you have but a desire to turn to God,
and a wish to be in charity with your
neighbour, with a firm purpose to endea-
vour both, you may with the greatest
safety draw near unto the Lord's table.
The threats of St. Paul are principally di-
rected against those to whom he writes,
the Corinthians, on account of some irre-
gularities, of which they had been guilty
in celebrating this sacrament: as we cele-
brate it in a different manner, the same
irregularities are not now practicable;
therefore the apostle's threats scarce seem
appli-

SERM.

V.

SERM. applicable to the Christians of these days;
 and even to the Corinthians, the punishment denounced is not so great as we may suppose it. There is one word, which has been too strongly translated in our Testament; in the original, the sense of the word evidently is not "damnation," but "condemnation." "For he who eateth
"and drinketh unworthily, eateth and
"drinketh condemnation to himself;"—and the word does not mean eternal, but temporal, condemnation; does not mean punishment in the next, but correction in order to amendment in this world: the very next verse explains it,—"For this
"cause many among you are weak, and
"sickly, and some sleep." Now this certainly can only relate to punishment in this life.

Not that I would be understood, that you should approach the altar with no preparation whatever, with no purposes at all
of

of repentance and amendment; indeed, I SERM.
think that is scarcely possible, but I would ^{V.}
not have you think every little defect a
sufficient reason to keep you away; I would
persuade you to do what you can; and it
may, be, nay it will be, if you persevere,
that you will acquire new grace and
strength, you will grow in holiness and vir-
tue; what you now look upon with terror,
will become your delight; and finally, having
finished your earthly course, you shall, from
partaking of the table of your Lord here on
earth, be advanced to the enjoyment of his
blessed society in the mansions of his
Father.

SERMON

of repentance and amendment; indeed I think that is not only possible, but I would not have you think every little detail a sufficient reason to keep you away; I would persuade you to do what you can; and in my way it will be in your power; that you will receive more grace and strength; you will grow in holiness and virtue; what you do look upon with terror will become your delight and strength; having finished your earthly course, you shall have the partaking of the table of our Lord Jesus Christ; be assured of the enjoyment of the blessed society in the kingdom of the Father.

AMEN

SERMON VI.

ON BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION.

ACTS xix.

PART OF THE 5TH AND 6TH VERSES.

They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them.

I PROPOSE, in this discourse, to treat of **SERM.**
two of the ceremonies of our church—bap- **VI.**
tism and confirmation: —they are closely
connected together, the one being only a
completion of the other. Something, per-
haps, I may advance, which may be de-
serving of the attention of you all; but I
more

SERM. more particularly request those to listen
VI.
to me, who are shortly to be brought before the bishop.

I shall begin by explaining to you, in the plainest words I can fix upon, how baptism came to be necessary; what the nature of it is; and what are the advantages which we derive from it.

When our first parent, Adam, was created, he was (as you must remember) forbidden to eat of the fruit of a certain tree which grew in the midst of the garden where he was placed; he was told, at the same time, that if he did eat of it, he should surely die. By *death* is meant, in this place, extinction of being; it is the same as if God had said — ‘In the day that thou transgressest my command, thou shalt lose that life which I have just conferred on thee!’ I mention this, because *death*, in the scriptures, sometimes means, at least is understood to mean, eternal punishment.

nishment after death; but that, in my **SERM.**
opinion, is not its meaning here. Well, **VI.**
notwithstanding God's goodness to him, Adam, tempted by the devil, having a bad example set him by his wife, and being seduced by his own passions, fell from his obedience; he ate of the tree whereof it had been commanded him—'Thou shalt not eat.' Was the sentence, then, executed upon him immediately?—not immediately; but it was pronounced;—and the respite, which was granted him, can only be considered of the same nature as that which passes between the condemnation and execution of a criminal. Several punishments, however, and pernicious effects of his crime, he instantly experienced; he was turned, with disgrace, out of that beautiful garden in which he had been placed; the ground was cursed for his sake, and he was condemned to procure his food from it with labour and sorrow; he

SERM. VI. he became mortal, and therefore subject to all the ill health, all the diseases, common to mortality;—the first steps in vice being made, his heart was in a degree corrupted, and he became more liable to vice in future; and I think it probable (for such is the usual consequence of guilt) that the powers of his understanding were considerably impaired. At length, the time arrived when he was to suffer his entire punishment; he died—he laid down that existence, which, had he preserved his innocence, would have been immortal;—he ceased to be; and, according to strict justice, he never would have revived—there would have been an entire end of him. Now all mankind, being sprung from this Adam, share in the ill consequences of his disobedience; they become liable to all the bad effects of his crime—and, among the rest, to death! Every one of us, like unto our first parent, after we
have

have run our short race here on earth, SERM.
sink into the grave—moulder in the dust VI.
from which we originally sprung—and,
but for God's boundless mercy, in that
state should we continue for ever.

I will now tell you of the remedy which
God has provided for this, which will bring
me to the immediate subject on which I
promised to treat.

“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ
“ shall all be made alive.” As by the trans-
gression of Adam we lost happiness and
immortality, by the perfect obedience of
Christ, even to the death upon the cross,
we regain them; or, what ought to be the
same thing, we are put in a condition of
regaining them, and cannot fail of them
if it be not our own fault. As connected
with Adam, we all sink into the grave;—
as connected with Christ, we shall all, at
a certain time, be raised again. To obtain
this high privilege, it is necessary that we

SERM.
VI.

take Christ to be our master—that we become his followers—that we are made one of that great body of which he is the head. Now this is done by baptism;—baptism is the ceremony which was appointed by himself for our admission into that society which he came to establish. The meaning of baptism is ‘washing,’ which may either be done, you know, by dipping the body into water, or by sprinkling water upon it—it is immaterial which. This is a proper and significant representation of what it is meant for,—namely, of that cleansing from the guilt of our first parent which is brought about in us, by taking Christ for our master. As water removes all foulness from the body, so becoming the servants of Christ removes all the foulness of sin (which had deprived us of the favour of God) from the soul.

We become by baptism, as the catechism expresses it, members of Christ, children

II. 10 V of

of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of SERM.
VI.
heaven. "Members of Christ," i. e. we

become united to him in a similar manner as the members of the body are to the head.

"Children of God," i. e. we are again restored to God's favour, he looks on us again as his sons; our likeness to him, which had been much impaired by the fall of Adam, is restored. "Inheritors of the kingdom of

"heaven," that is, we gain a title of being happy for ever both in body and soul: this had been lost by Adam's transgression, both for himself and his posterity; had it not been for Christ, when we had died there would have been an entire end of us; through his means, if it be not our own fault, we shall not only rise again and be immortal, but our immortality shall be accompanied likewise by infinite happiness. You will observe that I put in the clause, 'if it be not our own fault;' for there are certain conditions on our part to be performed after

SERM.
VI.

baptism, without which we shall not be entitled to the privileges of it; nay, if we neglect these conditions, there is reason to believe that we shall be in a far worse state than if Christ had never come. Christ has procured immortality for all mankind, that is, eternal existence; but whether this eternal existence shall be happy or miserable, depends on themselves; by their own misconduct they may turn what was meant as the greatest of blessings into the greatest of curses.

After the catechism has recited the privileges to which baptism gives us a claim, it proceeds to set forth the conditions on which we may secure them; and those conditions our god-fathers and god-mothers promise in our name that we shall observe. They are three; first, that we should renounce what God forbids; secondly, that we should believe what he teaches; thirdly, that we should do what he commands. Our
god-

god-fathers and god-mothers promise, first, SERM.
VI.
that we should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. We have reason from scripture to believe that there is an evil spirit called the devil, who being at enmity with God does all he can to counteract his gracious designs, and who is permitted to a certain degree to tempt to wickedness the sons of man. With this evil spirit, our sureties engage that we shall have no concerns; that we shall avoid or resist him. They engage, also, that we shall renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; that is, that we shall not be seduced by the attractive appearance of outward objects to seek to obtain any unlawful power, dishonest profit, or any forbidden pleasure. They engage, also, that we shall renounce all the sinful lusts of the flesh: the apostle St. Paul will tell you what this means—

SERM. " Now the works of the flesh are manifest,
VI.

~ " adulteries, fornication, uncleanness, ha-
" tred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions,
" envyings, and such like: "—we promise
to renounce then whatever God forbids,
every sin of every kind, and having done
this, a way is opened for the performance
of the other two promises made in our name;
for to abhor and fly from what is wrong,
are the first steps towards doing what is
right. It was engaged for us then, secondly,
that we should believe all the articles of
the Christian faith. These are to be found
at large in the scriptures; in the scriptures
is contained every thing which God teaches,
the chief heads, however, are thrown to-
gether in what is called the Apostle's Creed.
The authority on which our belief is claimed,
is so great, and the proofs, on which the
objects of it are founded, are so strong,
that, to those who examine into the matter,
there is no room for hesitation.

It

It was engaged for us, lastly, by our god-^{SERM.}
fathers and god-mothers, that we should ^{VI.}
keep God's holy will and commandments,
and walk in the same all the days of our
life.

To these scriptures also, we must have
recourse, to know what this will and these
commandments are; and, when we know
them, we shall find them so reasonable
in themselves—so calculated to make us
happy here—and so certain to conduct us
to heaven, when we die—that we shall be
convinced that we are deeply interested to
obey them. On the whole, then, the things
promised for us are greatly for our own
good, and tend, if we keep them, to make
us happy both here and hereafter. Hence,
if we are rational beings, we become bound
to perform them; and as, hitherto, we
have engaged to do so only by others, we
become bound, likewise, when we come to
years of discretion, to engage for our-
selves.

SERM.

VI.

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selves. And surely it is adviseable that this be done in a public manner, in the face of the world—that we may give a signal proof, to our friends and neighbours, that we are desirous to regulate our lives by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now an opportunity is given you of doing this at the confirmations, which are held from time to time for that purpose; there you may openly profess, before one of the heads of our church, and before all those amongst whom you live, that you approve of the engagements entered into in your name, by your god-fathers and god-mothers;—that you ‘confirm’ and take them upon yourselves;—and that you will endeavour, as much as you possibly can, to maintain them. If, when you are at a proper age, you neglect this, you forfeit all the privileges which are procured by baptism—since you plainly show that, if you had had a choice, you would not have  
been



been baptized; — otherwise, you would SERM.  
glady embrace the opportunity of ‘con- VI.  
firming’ it. Christ taught the absolute  
necessity of baptism, and ordered his  
apostles to go into the world, baptizing  
every one whom they converted to Christi-  
anity. No doubt then can exist, whether  
we ought to be baptized or no;—and if so,  
no doubt can exist, whether we ought to  
be confirmed:—our baptism was, on our  
parts, involuntary — it was performed by  
others; by confirmation alone, can we  
make it our own.

The first part of confirmation, then, is  
taking on ourselves the promise made in  
our name, by our sureties, at our bap-  
tism; the second part is the having the  
bishop lay his hands on our heads, and  
pray over us that we may receive God’s  
assistance in our endeavours to keep them:  
in other words, that we may increase con-  
tinually in the gifts of God’s holy spirit.

You

SERM.

VI.

you that the apostles used to lay their hands on the heads of those who had been baptized, and by that means communicated to them what are called the gifts of the Holy Ghost; the most conspicuous of these gifts were miraculous; the persons, over whom the apostles thus prayed, were enabled to do various things above the power of human beings: we are not to suppose that this was the case with all; but the remainder of them received, what was still more valuable, such a portion of heavenly grace, that their ignorance was removed, their hearts purified, and they were put in a way, if they were not wanting to themselves, of attaining the kingdom of God. The successors of the apostles, that is, the heads of the different churches, have, I believe, in all ages, continued this practice of praying over the baptized, that these last-mentioned gifts  
of



of the Holy Spirit may descend upon them. The miraculous gifts are now no more, because Christianity can propagate itself without them—which was the purpose for which they were intended; but the common gifts, though inferior in outward show, are, as I observed before, superior in real value. These gifts, we have reason to hope, will be conferred upon us at our confirmation, provided that we take upon ourselves the promises made at our baptism, with that firm resolution of keeping them, which we ought to do. In order, then, to prepare yourselves properly for confirmation, you ought to endeavour to make yourselves masters of the meaning of those promises which you then take upon yourselves, and of those privileges which you then attain; and you ought, likewise, to offer up your constant and ardent prayers to the Almighty—that he would so improve your understanding that  
you

SERM.  
VI.  
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**SERM.** you may perceive, in its full weight, the  
**VI.**  
 infinite importance of acting up to your professions; and that he would so purify your hearts that, in spite of all temptations to the contrary, your behaviour may be regulated accordingly:— which, may God, of his infinite mercy, grant!— to whom, with the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, obedience, and thanksgiving, now and for ever.

**SERMON**

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## SERMON VII.

ON THE LITURGY.

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### FIRST PART.

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1 CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

*I will pray with the understanding also.*

WHEN we assemble together to offer up SERM.  
VII.  
our prayers and thanksgivings to the Al-  
mighty, we should be careful that it be not  
with our lips only, but with our hearts also,  
that we approach him; and, to this end, it  
is requisite that we comprehend thoroughly  
the words which we make use of; we may  
pray with our mouth, without perceiving  
the meaning of what we are saying; but  
if we would pray with our heart, we must  
pray

SERM.  
VII.

~~pray with the understanding also.~~ The composers of the Form of Prayer, which we use in our churches, have, under this conviction, and with this view, adapted our Liturgy to all capacities, and in general it is plain and intelligible; but as there are particular parts of it, which may seem to some rather obscure, and as there are others, which perhaps are not sufficiently attended to, I shall in this, and some subsequent discourses, enter at large into an explanation of it; and in doing this, I shall endeavour to free it from some objections which have been made to it.

It is usual for every person, at his entrance into the house of the Lord, to offer up to him some short preparatory address in private; this is both decent and prudent; the subject of it should be always to beg, that we may perform our following devotions with attention, and that they may be accepted by our heavenly Father;  
the



the words which we may choose to make use of are not material, but perhaps none are better than these :—" Let the words of  
" my mouth, and the meditation of my  
" heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord,  
" my strength and my redeemer!"

But if it be necessary that all parts of our devotion should be performed with reverence and attention, it is more particularly necessary that this should be so, for surely it would be the height of absurdity to be then negligent and inattentive, when we are offering up our petitions against it; if we make this preparatory address only an empty form, which it is to be feared too many do, what is it but a solemn mockery of the Almighty!

The service opens with several detached sentences from scripture, one or more of which the minister is directed to read: the purport of some of them is, to recommend confession of sins and repentance,  
and.

SERM. and of others, to assure us, that if this  
VII. confession and this repentance are sincere,  
we shall save our souls alive. Now these  
are, with peculiar propriety, placed at the  
opening of our service; for, guilty crea-  
tures as we all are, confession of our guilt  
ought certainly to precede our supplica-  
tions; we ought surely not to presume to  
ask for blessings, before we have, with un-  
feigned sorrow, acknowledged our trans-  
gressions, and asked forgiveness of them.  
The efficacy of repentance is also expedi-  
ently set before us at the beginning of our  
devotions, since, if we believe every sin to  
be irreparable, it would answer no purpose  
to confess or to beg forgiveness; all hope  
would be precluded, and, consequently, all  
endeavour to obtain God's favour would be  
discouraged. After the recital of one, or  
more, of these sentences, there follows an  
exhortation, or piece of advice, from the  
minister to the congregation, grounded  
upon



upon them. It begins with the address SERM.  
VII.  
of "Dearly beloved brethren," which denotes the zeal that the minister has, or ought to have, for the spiritual welfare of his flock, and the deference and attention which they, in their turn, ought to pay to what proceeds from him. "The scripture  
" moveth us in sundry places, to acknow-  
" ledge and confess our manifold sins and  
" wickedness, and that we should not dis-  
" semble nor cloke them before the face  
" of Almighty God, our heavenly father,  
" but confess them with an humble, lowly,  
" penitent, and obedient heart." The meaning of this is evident; we are certainly commanded, in various places of the holy writings, to own our misdoings; not to think that we shall be able to conceal them from the Almighty God, and this we ought to do with an humble, mortified, and repentant sense of them, "to the end  
" (as the exhortation sets forth) that we



SERM. " may obtain forgiveness of the same, by  
VII.

“ his infinite goodness and mercy.” We confess our sins in order to obtain remission of them. “ If we confess our sins “ (says St. John) God is faithful and just “ to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us “ from all unrighteousness.” But although we ought at all times to make this acknowledgement, we ought to do it, most chiefly, when we are met together to give thanks for the favours we have received ; to celebrate the praises of our maker ; to hear his holy word read to us ; and to ask whatever is necessary both for our bodies and souls : this being the case, the congregation are besought to accompany the minister, with humble voices and sincere hearts, in the following general confession :—“ Al-  
“ mighty and most merciful father, we  
“ have erred and strayed from thy ways  
“ like lost sheep ;” this is in imitation of the following passage in scripture. “ All  
“ we,

“ we, like sheep, have gone astray, we SERM.  
VII.  
“ have turned every one to his own way;”

that is, like sheep who have deserted their shepherd, we have wandered from the paths of the Lord; “ we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts;” we have given ourselves too much up to the innate corruption of our nature, a corruption which we were born with, and derived from our first ancestor, but which, by the grace of God, we might, if we had endeavoured it, have surmounted. “ We have left undone what we ought to have done; and we have done what we ought not to have done.” Numberless acts of piety and benevolence, which it was our duty to have performed, we have neglected; numberless crimes, sins, and follies, which we ought to have avoided, we have committed; “ and there is no health in us;” we are spiritually sick and indisposed, and there is no salutary principle remaining



SERM.  
VII.

in us, by which we can, of ourselves, turn unto God: but, notwithstanding this, now that we have thus, according to thy will, confessed our infirmities, do thou, O Lord, of thy great goodness, have mercy upon us; spare us, according to thy most gracious promises to them who confess their faults; spare us, good Lord, and grant, O most merciful father, through the merits, and for the sake of thy dear son, that we may, for the time to come, lead a pious, just, and temperate life, such as may conduce to our own salvation, and to the glory of thy holy name. At the conclusion, the people, besides having joined in it audibly, shall say 'Amen,' which signifies, it is true; these are our real sentiments, the word expressing their hearty concurrence with what has been said, and their earnest desires that their petitions may be granted. After this confession follows the absolution, which is said by the priest alone, and



and in this the people are not to join, but merely to be silently attentive; for on this occasion the priest stands in the place of Christ's ambassador, and declares to the people the terms of God's reconciliation with them, on their faith in his word, and on their repentance and amendment. The objection to this part of our service, as savouring of Popery, cannot with justice be maintained; for the absolution of the Roman Catholic priests are given in private, and to each individual,—whereas this is given in public, is conceived in general terms, and is perfectly agreeable to scripture, there being conditions annexed to it; the minister declares to the congregation God's forgiveness of their sins, but he expressly limits it to those who are penitent, to those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. The absolution concludes with an exhortation, that we should beseech God to grant us this

SERM.

VII.

SERM.

VII.

true repentance, and, in order to it, the assistance of his holy spirit; that our present employment may be pleasing to him, and the rest of our life so pure and holy, that through the merits of Christ we may finally come to his eternal joy.

Next follows the Lord's Prayer, which is repeated several times in the course of the service; but having already explained it in my discourses on the Catechism, I shall not dwell upon it at present. And now, after having all joined audibly in the Lord's Prayer, which has been preceded by confession of sins, and by hearing the mercy of God proclaimed on certain terms, we go on to the Psalms, or to celebrating the praises of the Almighty. But that the transition may be the more natural, the minister prays that the congregation and himself may be enabled by God to perform the office, to which they are proceeding, in a proper manner: "Lord,

" open

SERM.  
VII.

“open thou our lips,” and the people answer “That so they shall be able to shew forth his praise.” These words are from the fifty-first Psalm, which is one of those in which David, oppressed by the sense of his guilt, dares not presume to sing the praises of God, before he had prepared himself for it by humiliation and repentance. The two following sentences are likewise taken from the Psalms. “O God, make speed to save us;” “O Lord make haste to help us;” and are aptly introduced on this occasion; for it is at all times reasonable to pray to God to save us from sin, and to help us in performing our duty; it is more particularly so, when we are about to perform so exalted an office as that of celebrating God’s praises. All are now ordered to stand up; we read, that when the Priests and Levites praised the Lord, all Israel stood: and we begin this good work by the sum of all the praises which

H 4.

we



SERM. we can offer, comprehended in a few words,  
 VII.  
 ~~~~~ to which we frequently afterwards return:

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
 “and to the Holy Ghost,” as it was paid
 them by the earliest of created beings,
 angels and archangels, and the whole host
 of heaven; as it is now paid them by the
 same holy personages and beings, and by
 good and righteous men, and as it shall
 continue still to be for ever and ever,
 world without end, to a length of time
 to which there shall be no period.

And now the unspeakably great subject,
 which we are to celebrate, being proposed,
 the minister calls on the people for the im-
 mediate performance of it. “Praise ye
 “the Lord;” to which they are to answer
 with readiness and cheerfulness, signifying
 their joyful concurrence with the proposal,
 “The Lord’s name be praised.” We now
 proceed to the Psalms, which are divided
 into certain portions, and such a number
 of

of them appointed to be read each day, so SERM.
VII.
that they all come over every month. In
our morning service, however, the ninety-
fifth Psalm is commanded always to be
read first, and with singular propriety, it
being a distinct invitation to the several
duties of praise, prayer, and hearing the
word, with an awful warning of the danger
of neglecting God, drawn from his judg-
ments on the disobedient Jews. “ O come,
“ let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily
“ rejoice in the strength of our salvation;”
O come let us join together in praising
our maker; let us rejoice and be glad
that such an all-powerful being is the
guardian both of our present and future
safety. “ Let us come before his pre-
“ sence with thanksgivings; let us shew
“ ourselves glad in him with psalms;” let
us approach him with grateful thanks for
his blessings; let us shew what joy we
have in the contemplation of him by rap-
turous

SERM. turous hymns: "For the Lord is a great

VII.

“ God, he is king above all gods ;” he is unspeakably superior to all who have been called gods by the heathen, to all their deified princes and heroes, and, in comparison with him, the highest orders of archangels are less than nothing. “ In his hands are all the corners of the earth, “ and the strength of the hills is his also :” his influence, his presence, extends to the most remote and inaccessible places, and there is none where he cannot save or destroy. “ The sea is his, and he made it “ and his hands prepared the dry land. O “ come then let us worship and fall down before the universal Father, for he is the “ Lord our God, and we are the people of his “ pasture and the sheep of his hand,”—we depend on him for the supply both of our bodily and spiritual food, and, notwithstanding his greatness, he graciously administers to our wants, with as much tenderness as a

shep-

shepherd to the wants of his flock. "To
" day if ye will hear his voice, harden not
" your hearts as in the provocation, and as
" in the day of temptation in the wilder-
" ness;"—be not obstinate and disobedient
as the children of Israel were, when they
wandered forty years in the desert, mur-
muring and repining, after having been so
miraculously brought out of Egypt by, Mo-
ses; follow not their example, nor tempt
and provoke God, as they did, but soften
your hearts, be religious and virtuous im-
mediately, to-day, whilst it can be called
to-day, lest you be hardened through the
deceitfulness of sin. Hear the tremendous
words of God himself, with regard to that
rebellious crew. "I swear in my wrath
" that they should not enter into my rest;"
this was addressed to them in a temporal
sense, and relates to their exclusion from
the promised land of Canaan; but be as-
sured, that if ye imitate their wicked con-
duct,

SERM.
VII.

SERM. duct, the threat will be fulfilled to you in a
VII. spiritual sense, and you will be eternally
 shut out from the kingdom of heaven.

After the repetition of the doxology, which is commanded to be again also repeated after every psalm, we proceed to a certain portion of the Psalms, which are appointed for the particular day of the month; but, as it will be necessary to say much on this subject, I shall reserve the farther prosecution of it to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

ON THE LITURGY.

SECOND PART.

1 CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the understanding also.

THE last time we met together, I mentioned my intention of employing some discourses in explaining our church service, and I proceeded in this explanation as far as the Psalms. I observed that we begin our devotions by one or more detached sentences from scripture being recited by the minister, in which confession of sin is recommended, and the efficacy of repentance set forth. I took notice of the propriety of
this;

SERM.
VIII.

SERM.
VIII.

this; for, guilty creatures as we all are, the owning our misdeeds ought certainly to precede our petitions for favours and blessings; and the assurance of pardon on repentance is expediently set before us, to give that warmth, that faith to our supplications, which are essentially requisite to render them acceptable.

After these sentences follows an exhortation from the minister, grounded on them, with a call to the immediate performance of the duty of confession of sins.

After the confession follows the absolution, in which the minister declares God's pardon of the people's transgressions on certain terms, — on their sorrow for what is past, and their amendment in future; this is followed by the prayer taught by our Saviour himself to his disciples; after which, having first besought the Almighty to open our lips, that we may be enabled properly to sing his praises, we proceed to the

Psalms,

Psalms, to the celebration of the praises of the Lord. This duty, I observed, opens by the sum of all which we can offer, comprised in a short compass:—"Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" as it was sung from the very beginning of the creation, so it still is, and shall continue to be for ever and ever, to a duration to which there shall be no period. And now the unspeakably great subject of our spiritual songs being proposed, the minister invites the congregation to the immediate performance of this sublime duty:—"Praise ye the Lord;" to which they reply, with joyful concurrence in the proposal, "The Lord's name be praised."

In the morning service we are always directed to begin with the ninety-fifth Psalm, which is a distinct invitation to the several duties of prayer, praise, humiliation, and thanksgiving; with a terrible instance of God's punishment of the rebellious

Jews,

SERM.
VIII.

SERM.

VIII.

caused their neglect of them: "I swore in
 "my wrath that they should not enter into
 "my rest;" this threat was fulfilled with
 respect to them, in their exclusion from
 the promised land of Canaan; but it will
 be fulfilled, with respect to us, in a higher
 sense, if we follow their wicked example,
 by our being shut out from the kingdom of
 heaven. We next go on to read certain
 psalms appointed for the particular day of
 the month. Here I broke off in my last
 discourse, and it was at this place that I en-
 gaged to resume the subject. The first
 and strict meaning of a psalm, is a song
 in praise of God; but, in its more extended
 sense, it signifies any song on a religious
 subject; the greater part of those, which
 are called David's Psalms, are, strictly
 speaking, psalms, that is, they are spiritual
 songs, in which the wisdom, goodness,
 power, or some other perfections of the
 Deity

Deity, are celebrated; but yet there are many on other subjects, where the praises of God make only an incidental part; there are some which are called penitential psalms, where the author confesses and laments some wickedness of which he has been guilty; others, which contain imprecations or wishes of evil to some enemy, either of the writer himself or of God; there are some which pray for deliverance from affliction, some for pardon of sin; while there are others which may be called prophetic psalms, foretelling future events, particularly the coming of Christ, and the establishment of his kingdom. Almost all of these we may, with great propriety, use, and, in some manner or other, apply to ourselves. We have all reason to join in God's praises—we have all of us sins to confess and lament—we have all of us enemies, either spiritual or bodily, from whom we desire deliverance—and we most

SERM.
VIII.

SERM.

VIII.

of us, at one time or other, labour under afflictions from which we wish to be freed. The psalms, which contain imprecations or prophecies, seem to be exceptions; but, as to the first, we may observe that they are directed against God's enemies, the wicked, and seem not so much to be wishes as predictions of evil; as to the latter, when we read them, we may admire God's goodness in inspiring holy men to foretel such blessings to the human race, and we may rejoice in their accomplishment. These psalms are called David's Psalms, because the greater part were composed by him; but there are many, which were written by others: it is not now well known by whom they were collected; probably by different persons; and they were finally put into one book by Ezra, on the return from the Babylonish captivity; — and the ancient custom of singing them in the temple and synagogue

was

was restored by him :—this custom is still observed by the Jews ; it was likewise, in the earliest times, adopted by the Christians, and has continued to this day :—the singing them has indeed been changed for reading, not perhaps without some loss of devotion ; however, such is the custom at present. We must be careful, in reading these psalms, to consider who it is that speaks, for the author does not always speak in his own person ; sometimes the words are put into the mouth of God or Christ, sometimes they are given to wicked men ; but a moderate degree of attention will enable us, in general, to distinguish this. The psalms which we have in our Prayer-Book, are translated from the same original as those in the Bible ; the words are somewhat different, but the sense you will find to be, in general, the same : the translation in the Prayer-Book was made in older times

SERM.
VIII.

than that in the Bible; and, as the people were used to it, it was not thought advisable to change it, though perhaps that in the Bible is in some respects better.— I observed to you that these psalms are divided into different portions, one of which is directed to be read every day, so that they will all come over every month; — however, on some particular fasts and festivals, particular psalms, applicable to the occasion, have been selected.

I shall dismiss this subject by observing, that the book of Psalms is an inexhaustible treasure of every branch of piety, prayer, praise, humiliation, and thanksgiving;— and, therefore, a more constant use of it, than of other parts of the scripture, is very properly enjoined in our Form of Prayer.

As we began with confession of sins, and then proceeded to setting forth God's
most

most worthy praise,—we now go on to SERM.
hear his most holy word, the minister VHI.
being directed to read select portions from
the Old and New Testament. It was

always esteemed a solemn part of divine
worship among God's people, the Jews,
to read in their assemblies his word; they
were positively commanded to do it.—

“ When all Israel is come to appear be-
“ fore the Lord thy God, in the place
“ which he shall choose, thou shalt read
“ this law before all Israel in their hear-
“ ing.”

It was a custom with the Jews to read
the ‘ Law ’ for the first lesson, that is, the
five books of Moses, called the Pentateuch;
and the Prophets for the second. We
Christians, who have the New Testament
in addition to the Old, take our first lesson
from the law and prophets together, that
is, from the whole Jewish scriptures, and
our second lesson from the New Testa-

SERM. ment, which contains four histories of the
VIII. life of our Saviour, written by four different persons, and likewise the epistles or letters of some of his most eminent followers.

Where there is church every day in the week, the Old Testament, with some exceptions of repetitions and less useful or more difficult parts, is, the whole of it, read over once every year, and the New Testament three times. The books of both Testaments are read in the same order in which they stand, except that, in the Old, the prophet Isaiah (who foretels, in the fullest manner, the coming of Christ) is read immediately before Christmas-Day, the day of Christ's birth; and, in the New, the Gospels are read in the morning, and the Epistles in the afternoon. I should observe however that, excepting two or three chapters, the book of Revelations is never read in public, as it

is very difficult to be understood, and fit SERM.
VIII.
only for the private study of those who
are qualified for it.

I must pause here, earnestly to recommend to you, to be seriously attentive while the word of God is reading; it always speaks on the most important subjects; and, though it may not be always easy to understand every part of it, yet the difficulty will lessen by attention, and some good may always be drawn from particular parts, though now and then the portion appointed to be read may not, in general, be intelligible to the unlearned. But let me hope that you will not content yourselves with what is read to you of God's word in public, but employ yourselves frequently in either reading, or listening to others reading it in private. It used to be a custom, in every family, to pass much of the Sabbath in reading the Bible, and I trust the same custom re-

SERM.
VIII.

main in many, yet; no employment can be more profitable; it will give consolation to the afflicted, and reproof to the iniquitous—it will give faith to the unbeliever, and increase the godliness of the sober-minded: I entreat you, therefore, to make yourselves well acquainted with this most valuable of all books; it will prove your surest protection from the assaults of the devil, and best preservative from the practice of habitual wickedness. You may, occasionally, fall into temptations, and even yield to them—but, if you are constant in reading the Bible, it will be almost impossible for you not to leave off sinning presumptuously.

Its precepts will so open your hearts to a sense of what is right—its promises of everlasting glory will so excite your hopes — its threatenings of everlasting misery will so alarm your fears — that you must be quite abandoned of God, and given

given over to a reprobate mind, if it does not arouse you to piety and virtue.

SERM.
VIII.


I should now proceed to a consideration of the hymns which follow each of the lessons, but this I must defer to a future opportunity.

SERMON

given over to a torpid mind, it is done. *REMARK.*
 and answer you to duty and virtue.

I should now proceed to a consideration
 of the system which follow each of the
 lessons, but this I must defer to a future
 opportunity.

SELECTION

SERMON IX.

ON THE LITURGY.

THIRD PART.

I CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the understanding also.

IN my last discourse on this subject, I proceeded in my explanation of our church service, as far as those hymns which are repeated after each of the lessons; and it was there that I engaged to resume it. These hymns or psalms are, with much propriety, intermixed with hearing the word of God, each promoting the benefit which we receive from the other; thus, the hearing the word is apt to excite in us grati-

SERM.
IX.

SERM. gratitude and thankfulness, which we shew
IX. forth in celebrating our Maker's praise,
and this latter again will dispose us to
listen with a greater degree of attention
and delight to the word. There are two
hymns which follow each lesson, both in
morning and afternoon, and it is left to
the minister's choice which he will read;
but as the custom, in general, is to read
the same particular one, I shall not dwell
upon the others. Of the four which are
used, the three latter are taken from scrip-
ture; that which follows the first lesson
in the morning is not so, but it is recom-
mended to us, both by the length of time
which it has been used in the Christian
church, and by its own intrinsic excellence.
It is called *Te Deum*, from the two first
words of it in Latin, which was the lan-
guage it was originally written in. "We
praise thee, O God, we acknowledge
thee to be the Lord;" — we confess
that

that thou art the supreme sovereign of SERM.
the universe. "All the earth doth wor- IX.

"ship thee, the Father everlasting;"—
there is no corner of the globe so barba-
rous, there has been no age so rude, but
that devotions have been offered to thee,
the common father of all, from all eter-
nity. But not only do the human race
worship thee, the angels also, the heavens
and all the powers that are therein, cheru-
bim and seraphim (two different orders of
celestial beings) celebrate without ceasing
thy praises, evermore crying, "Holy, holy,
" holy, Lord God of sabaoth, heaven and
" earth are full of the majesty of thy
" glory." This exclamation is copied from
the sixth chapter and the third verse of
Isaiah, where the prophet represents the
seraphims, whom he saw in a vision, stand-
ing before the throne of the Lord, continu-
ally crying to each other, "Holy, holy,
" holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth

is

SERM. "is full of his glory." I should observe to

IX.

you here, that the word sabaoth is the Hebrew word for hosts, and that it does not mean the Sabbath day, as perhaps it is generally thought, for though the two words are alike in sound, they are very different in sense.

The Almighty is frequently called by this name in the scriptures, God of sabaoth, or Lord of hosts or armies; and it signifies the sovereign of angels, archangels, and all the heavenly powers; of stars, planets, and all the various worlds which make up the universe; of good and virtuous men, whether before or since the times of Christianity; all these make up the army of the Lord, of which he is general and commander. "The glorious company of the
" apostles praise thee; the goodly fellow-
" ship of the prophets praise thee; the
" noble army of martyrs (those who laid
" down their lives for thy sake) praise
" thee."

All

All these illustrious personages, as it SERM.
IX.
was their employment and delight while
on earth, in defiance of all dangers and
sufferings, to assert thy glory and to per-
form thy will, so is it (now that they are
freed from their labours and sorrows) their
highest happiness to hymn thy praises.
Thy church, likewise, throughout all the
world, is incessantly proclaiming and cele-
brating thee, the Father of an infinite ma-
jesty; and with thee, Jesus Christ, thine
honourable, true, and only Son; and the
other, the third person in the ever blessed
Trinity, the Holy Ghost, our comforter,
instructor, and supporter. We then re-
turn again to the praises of our redeemer:
“Thou art the king of glory, O Christ;
“thou art the everlasting son of the fa-
“ther:—thou wast the son of the Al-
mighty from all eternity. “When thou
“tookest upon thee to deliver man”—
when thou undertookest to come down upon
earth,

SERM.

IX.

earth, to free the human race from sin and the punishment due to it, "thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb;"—thou didst not disdain to be born of the Virgin Mary. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, by willingly thyself submitting to it, thou tookest from it its chief sting, by opening widely the kingdom of heaven to all true believers. Thou art now exalted to the right hand of God, where thou sittest partaker of the father's glory, whence, we are convinced, that thou wilt descend, at the last day, to be our judge. On which account, we pray thee, assist thy servants in their passage through this sinful world, those servants to whom thou hast shewn so much love, as to redeem them with thy most precious blood; take them into the number of those saints, who sit with thee in everlasting glory. "O Lord, save thy people, and bless thine heritage;"—bless those whom the father hath given thee, whom

whom indeed thyself purchased with thy life. "Govern them and lift them up for
SERM.
IX.

"ever,"—and evermore support them.

"Day by day we magnify thee;"—we pay all honour to thy perfections, and let us take care that we may with truth affirm this. And we perpetually pay our devotions to thy holy name; vouchsafe therefore, condescend this day, to watch over us and keep us free from sin. "O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us; O Lord, let thy mercy lighten, or fall, upon us, as our whole trust and confidence is in thee. O Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded, and subdued by my spiritual enemies."

The second lesson being ended, we recite the hundredth Psalm, which seems to come with peculiar propriety, after listening to a portion from the gospels. It particularly relates to the gospel times, as appears from its inviting all lands, or nations, to rejoice in

SERM. the Lord, and to come before his presence
IX.
with songs, as it declares that we are all
equally his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Now follows the Apostles' Creed, called by the name of the Apostles, not from any well-grounded pretensions which it has to have been drawn up by them, but from its containing a brief enumeration of the important doctrines which they delivered. It is called Creed, from the first word of it in Latin, *Credo*, signifying 'I believe.'

As I explained each separate article of it in my discourses on the Catechism, I shall not at present dwell upon it, but merely observe, that the reason of our being ordered to repeat it is, that we may fix the more deeply in our minds the truths which are necessary to be believed, in order to our eternal happiness, and that we may bear open testimony of our agreeing together in the unity of the faith.

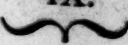
After

After this solemn profession, the minister and the people betake themselves to prayer, —first, mutually interceding with God for each other, that they may be enabled to offer him an acceptable sacrifice; such is the meaning of “The Lord be with you,” and the reply of the congregation, “And with thy spirit.”

SERM.
IX.

Having thus mutually prepared each other for the following service, which consists wholly of petitions, they begin them with short sentences:—“ Lord have mercy upon us; Christ have mercy upon us;” to which is subjoined the Lord’s Prayer. If there are any, who take offence at this prayer being repeated so often, let them remember that it was Jesus Christ himself who was the author of it; and though we are cautioned against using vain repetitions in our prayers, yet, all repetitions cannot be vain, since our Saviour is described, in the twenty-sixth

SERM. chapter of St. Matthew, begging God
IX. to remove the cup from him three times,
and in the very same words. The minister now stands up, and he, together with the people, offers up in short terms the heads of what they afterwards, in the following prayers, ask for more at length; this may be perceived by any one, who will compare them together; the short sentences are so plain as to require no explanation. The collects are then directed to follow; they are called collects, either from their having collected in them much good matter, or from their being repeated when the people are collected, or assembled together: and the first of these collects is that for the day. There are collects appointed for the celebration of the principal parts of Christ's History; for instance, a collect for his birth, for his death, resurrection, and ascension; there are likewise collects to bring to our minds,
and

and to pray that we may imitate, the holy SERM.
IX.
lives and deaths of his chief followers. 

But, besides these, there are collects likewise appointed for each Sunday and week in the year; and the intention I suppose was, that we might at different times pray for different Christian endowments, and so obtain all which is needful for us. These are the whole of the variable collects, the others are fixed. Of the two, which immediately follow in the morning, the first is for peace, which is a comprehensive word in this place for all temporal blessings, and the second for grace, which is meant to comprise all spiritual blessings. After these two collects, on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the Litany is directed to follow; but, as this was originally meant for a distinct office, I shall take another opportunity of explaining it, and proceed now with the other parts of the service. Having put up the above-men-

SERM.

IX.

tioned prayers for ourselves, we now begin our intercessions for others; and first, according to the apostle's injunctions, for the king as supreme. In this prayer, I know not that there is any difficulty; the word 'replenish' means to fill; and the word 'wealth' means prosperity;—"Grant "him in health and wealth long to live,"—grant him to live long in health and prosperity. The prayer for the royal family is very properly subjoined, from the interest which the people have in them; both as in their turns they may one or more of them be called to the throne, and as the conduct of persons, in such a conspicuous situation, is likely deeply to affect the national manners. Our temporal superiors being thus prayed for, we next put up our petitions for our spiritual guides, and for all congregations committed to their charge, for bishops and curates, that is, for bishops and all the inferior clergy, and

and all people under their superintendance. **SERM.**
IX.
We next pray, during the sitting of parliament, for God's blessing on its consultations, which is peculiarly proper, the happiness of the nation entirely depending, under God, on the wisdom of its measures. And now having gone through our prayers for particular persons, we subjoin one for all mankind in general, and more especially for the members of the Christian Church, that they may profess the same faith, that they may live in peace with each other, and may lead religious and virtuous lives. In the same prayer, likewise, we intercede for the sick, and those who are any otherwise afflicted or distressed, and, at his desire, for any particular individual who may be in such a situation; and here let me observe, that it is both decent and necessary, that whoever receives benefit, after having besought the prayers of the congregation, should, at his first

SERM.
IX.

coming to church, on his recovery, request the same congregation to join with him in giving thanks; otherwise, he subjects himself to our Saviour's reproach to the lepers, who, when he had healed ten of them, and only one returned to thank him, said, "Were there not ten cleansed, " but where are the nine?" After this follows the general thanksgiving, in which we testify our gratitude to God, for all the instances of his loving kindness to us, and more especially for his having condescended to redeem us, by giving his only Son to die for us; and we humbly entreat him, that we may not only with our lips, by empty words, but in our lives, by our deeds also, shew the sense which we entertain of his kindness. Last, comes a prayer taken from the Liturgy of Saint Chrysostom, one of the most celebrated fathers of the Christian church; in it we ascribe to God the grace which
has

has prompted us to meet together, to put up our petitions to him; we encourage ourselves with Christ's promise, that when two or three are gathered together, he is among them; all our desires, however, we submit to him, asking only that he will grant such as may be expedient for us, such as may be for our real advantage, among which we may speak with confidence of two particulars, knowledge of his truth, and life everlasting. Finally, we close with St. Paul's farewell to the Corinthians; praying that the favour of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the residence of the Holy Ghost, may be always amongst us.

SERM.
IX.

SERMON

has prompted us to meet together, to put
up our petitions to him; we encourage our-
selves with Christ's promise, that when
two or three are gathered together, he is
among them; all our desires, however, we
submit to him, trusting only that he will
grant such as may be expedient for us, such
as may be for our well-being, and
which we have seen to be of
two particular knowledge of his truth
and his everlasting. Finally, we close
with St. Paul's benediction to the Corinthians;
praying that the love of God, and the love
of Christ, the love of God, and the love
of the Holy Ghost, may be always
amongst us.

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON THE LITURGY.

FOURTH PART.

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the understanding also.

I SHOULD now, if I proceeded regularly in SERM.
X.
this subject, take into consideration those ~
parts of our evening service, which differ
from the morning, and after that explain
to you the Litany; but as the celebration
of the Lord's supper is approaching, I
rather choose to postpone these for the pre-
sent, and beg your attention, while I dis-
course on our communion service. It is
called the communion service, because, in
a part

SERM. a part of it, we partake together of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, the meaning of the word 'communion' being "a partaking together." The beginning of it, which we use, when we do not celebrate the Lord's supper, goes by the same name. It opens with the Lord's Prayer, which appears peculiarly proper, when we are entering on so solemn an office. After this follows an old and excellent collect, in which we pray to God, to whom the hearts of all men are open, and their desires, their imaginations, and their wishes, known—to cleanse, to purify, to make virtuous, the thoughts of ours, by the inspiration of his holy spirit, that is, by breathing into us such good dispositions, that we may, as perfectly as human nature will permit, love him, and worthily magnify his holy name; fitly, properly, both in our conversations and our lives, shew the sense that we entertain of his goodness. The ten command-

mandments, which were delivered by God to **SERM.**
Moses, for the use of the Jews, and which, **X.**
from their great excellence, are binding on
Christians also, are now recited by the mi-
nister; the people, between each of them,
on their knees, begging mercy of God for
those of them which they may have trans-
gressed, and beseeching him to incline their
hearts to obey them more perfectly in
future.

After them follows a prayer for the
king; it being his authority, which is one
great support of these commandments,
and they again contributing, by their in-
fluence on the conduct of men, to support
his authority.

In this prayer we beseech of God so to
rule the king's heart, that he, from being
sensible that he is God's minister, or ser-
vant, may make it his first study to pro-
mote God's glory, which he cannot more
effectually do, than by enforcing the ob-
servance

SERM.

X.

servance of the above ten commandments, and himself setting an example of it in his own behaviour; we petition, likewise, that we, and all other his subjects, duly considering, remembering as we ought, that his authority is derived from God, that is, that he reigns by God's permission, may faithfully serve, honour, and obey him, in God, and for God, according to his blessed word and ordinance, that is, in obedience to God's commands in scripture, such as,—
“Honour the king; let every soul be subject to the higher powers,” and other texts of this tenor. We now repeat again the collect for the day, and after it the minister reads two portions of scripture, usually from the New Testament, the first taken generally from the epistles, the latter always from the gospels; the collect, for the most part, relates to these portions from scripture, and entreats of God to grant us some Christian grace, which is incul-

inculcated in them, or may be drawn from them. Though there is no particular direction for it at present, it is said always to have been the custom for the people to stand up at the reading of the gospel, and likewise to make the exclamation at the beginning,—“Glory be to thee, O Lord;” this latter, indeed, was in some of the very early English Prayer Books, but was afterwards omitted, for what reason I know not; but the custom, with great propriety, has been kept up; for surely the gift of the gospel, the gift of God’s only son, to instruct and save to us, is what, above all other instances of his goodness, calls on us to unite in glorifying him. If we examine these portions of scripture, called Gospels (as being taken from the four Lives of our Saviour, which go by that name) we shall find that, beginning from the Advent, or near approach of the coming of Jesus Christ, they give us, in the setting
out

SERM.

X.

SERM. out of them, the principal parts of his his-
X.
tory, as far as his ascension, or leaving of
the earth, and being taken into heaven, and
after that, in the succeeding parts, they
give us instructions on the principal heads
of our own duty.

We now repeat another creed, which was
drawn up fourteen hundred years ago, by
an assembly of all the most eminent
Christian clergy in the world, at the city of
Nice, and called from thence the Nicene
Creed; on this I shall not dwell, as the
parts of it, which differ from the Apostles'
Creed, are not many, and those, I think,
not important for you minutely to con-
sider; a belief in those parts of it, which
are the same with the Apostles' Creed,
is all which is necessary, and that I have
explained in my lectures on the cate-
chism. With this creed the common
church service usually concludes, and the
remainder of the office is read only when
the

the Lord's supper is celebrated. This SERM.
more solemn part of the office opens with ^{X.}
detached sentences from scripture, being
read by the minister, exhorting the congregation to liberality and charity, and setting forth their merit and value in the sight of God; in the mean time a gathering of alms, from such as are able to contribute, is made; and this is a time, surely, when, above all others, it behoves men to shew their love to their distressed brethren, when they are about to commemorate their dying Saviour's excessive love to themselves. Some of these sentences you will find exhorting you to contribute to the minister, it having formerly been a custom to make offerings to him at this time; but that custom being done with, we do not now read them. After this we pray for the whole estate of Christ's church militant here on earth, that is, for all Christians, of whatever sect, who are carrying

SERM. on, as it were, a war with the world, the
X. flesh and the devil, for that is the meaning
of 'militant';—fighting, contending with.
This very comprehensive prayer is so plain,
as to require no explanation. Now follows
an exhortation from the minister to the
communicants, which, as it has been much
misunderstood, there is reason to lament
that it has been drawn up in such strong
terms; it having deterred, it is to be feared,
too many, even of well-disposed persons,
from doing an indispensable part of their
duty. The phrases of 'being guilty of the
body and blood of Christ,' and of 'eating
and drinking your own damnation,' are
drawn from the xith chapter of St. Paul's
first epistle to the Corinthians, which I shall
endeavour to explain to you. The apostle
had been told that the Corinthians, in cele-
brating the Lord's supper, did not discern
the Lord's body, that is, that they made no
difference between this festival, which had
been

been appointed by Christ, and a common SERM.
meal; they began without waiting for each X.
other; nay, some of them even carried
their irreverence so far as to be drunken,
while others were not able to get any thing.
This, the apostle tells them, was not to celebrate the Lord's supper, for it was entirely to mistake its nature and design; it was not meant for people to satisfy their hunger at it; that might be done at home, at their own houses; but it was meant to keep up a perpetual remembrance of the death of Christ, of his body which was broken, and his blood which was poured out for our sakes: of these the bread and wine are signs and tokens, and we are to eat and drink them with reverence and gratitude, making a difference between this and common meals, and reflecting with sincere thankfulness on the amazing act of kindness which it represents. Now this the Corinthians did not; for they behaved just as they did at
L 2 their

SERM. their common meetings, which, St. Paul
X.

~ says, is to receive the sacrament unworthily, and those who do so, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, they are guilty of mis-prising, of irreverently treating them; and they, therefore, eat and drink their own judgment or condemnation (not damnation) and the meaning of it is, that their irreverence draws on them God's displeasure, which he shews, not in damning them to all eternity (for this crime, as well as others, is an object of pardon, if repented of) but in visiting them with sickness and weakness, and some of them, who are incorrigible, with death.

Now, surely, there is no danger that *we* should be guilty of this fault of the Corinthians; *we* well know, when we receive the sacrament, that it is not a common meal of which we partake; *we* shall discern the Lord's body; *we* shall perceive that it is in remembrance of its having been
broken

broken for us, and of his blood having been poured out, that we eat the bread and drink the wine, and, if we have any gratitude in our nature, we cannot but feel it on the occasion. I do not know that a man's sinning, after he has partaken of the Lord's supper, puts him in a worse state than if he had not partaken of it, at least, I am sure, it does not render his sin unpardonable. St. Peter, you remember, was present when Christ presided at it himself, and immediately after denied his master thrice, and yet we do not find but that on repentance, he met with forgiveness: in like manner, we, if we repent, shall be pardoned for any faults we may have committed, though we receive the sacrament ever so often. If, indeed, we are conscious that we are sinners, and are not at all sorry for our sins, and if we are determined never to try to be better, I know not then what to say; it does not then perhaps

SERM. signify what we do:—but only consider
 X.
 what a state this is for a man to be in! he is, as it were, a candidate for eternal condemnation, he has voluntarily resigned himself, even without an effort, to everlasting misery! Think not that I am talking to you either what is fabulous or very distant; I speak the words of truth and soberness; I speak of what is near, even at our doors! We may be called on immediately to answer for our neglect of God's commands, but we know that we shall certainly be called on before many years are over, and then our final condition is irrevocably fixed. But let me proceed with the explanation of the service.

After setting forth in terms, I think, too strong (because they are the occasions of mistakes) the danger of receiving the sacrament unworthily, the exhortation goes on to point out how we may receive it worthily; this is to be done by self-examination,

nation, or rather, I think, by recollection, **SERM.**
by fixing strongly in our minds the action **X.**
we are about to perform, by a thorough belief in Christ, by a firm purpose of amendment of life; by a friendly disposition towards all men; and lastly, above all, by thankfulness to heaven for our redemption. The minister then calls on the people to draw near and perform this sacred act, and first, as preparatory to it, to make confession of their sins.

We must consider this confession (as indeed every other part of the service) before we come to it, and endeavour to work up our minds to the feelings it expresses; some of the terms in it are strong, such as — “The burden of our sins is intolerable to us” — which perhaps few can say in its full extent; but this proceeds from want of reflection in too many of us, who have reason enough to be weighed down under the sense of

SERM. our sins: and indeed, were it not for
 X.
 Christ's death, which we are met to commemorate, this would be the case with all; so that it may mean the burden of them, if we had none but ourselves to support them, would be intolerable.

This confession being ended, the minister (himself one of the sinners) stands up—and, beginning with a declaration of the terms on which God has promised forgiveness (which are repentance and faith)—he prays God to deliver the congregation from all their sins, to strengthen them in all goodness — and, finally, to bring them to everlasting life. He then confirms this declaration of pardon; shews his authority for it, in four detached sentences from scripture, spoken by our Lord, and his apostles St. Paul and St. John. He then calls on the people to lift up their hearts, with gratitude and devotion, to heaven—to which they signify
 their

their concurrence—"We will lift them up SERM.
"unto the Lord"—to which follows an in- X.
vitation to the giving of thanks, and the con-
gregation's acknowledgement of its propriety—"It is meet and right so to do."

The minister, taking up these last words and sentiment from the mouth of the people, repeats them (with the addition of a preface on particular days) and declares the union of men, and more particularly of those then present with angels and arch-angels in the sublime employments of thankfulness and devotion. Being approached now very nearly to the performance of the most solemn part, the minister declares, in the name of the people, the grounds on which we approach God's holy altar;—that it is not trusting in our own merits, but in his manifold and great mercies; and he beseeches God to grant that the blessed effects of being cleansed from sin, and of an union with
Christ,

SERM. Christ, may be the consequences of it.

X.
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Now follows the consecration of the elements; or, in other words, the priest, relating the history of Christ's institution of the Lord's supper, sets apart a particular quantity of bread and wine as signs, tokens, or representations, of the body and blood of Christ. These, after receiving them himself, he delivers to the people, with a solemn prayer that they may answer the purpose which God and Christ graciously intended—that they may preserve the bodies and souls of those who receive them, unto everlasting life;—and, at the same time, he calls on the person receiving, for reflection, faith, and thankfulness.

All having communicated, we again repeat the Lord's Prayer; having, we may hope by our recent act, strengthened our right to address him by the title of 'Our Father.' We then entirely, that is, with  
our



our whole hearts, request of God to accept this our offering of praise and thanksgiving, and beg leave to present our souls and bodies as a sacrifice, dedicated to his service — and we pray, likewise, for our fellow-communicants. As our Saviour and his disciples, after the celebration of the passover, sung an hymn, so, in our service, is one provided for us — “Glory be to God  
“on high.” — The beginning is taken from the hymn of the heavenly host, mentioned by St. Luke; in it we give thanks to God for his great glory, that is, for his glorious work in the redemption of the world, by the death of his only begotten Son. It is usual, afterwards, to read one of the concluding collects, but these require no explanation. What remains, is the solemn and affectionate form of dismissal, in which the minister prays that  
“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (that is, the happiness which  
arises

SERM.

X

**SERM.** arises from the knowledge and love of  
 X. God, which exceeds our utmost concep-  
 tions) " may keep your hearts and minds,  
 and that all the blessings of the Holy Tri-  
 nity may be dispersed amongst and remain  
 with the congregation ; — to God, there-  
 fore, the Father, the Son, and the Holy  
 Ghost, be ascribed all might, majesty, and  
 dominion, for ever."

**SERMON**

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## SERMON XI.

ON THE LITURGY.

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### FIFTH PART.

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1 CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

*I will pray with the understanding also,*

ONE part of my engagement to explain **SERM. XI.** our usual church service being yet unfilled, permit me now to call your attention to it. I have already discoursed on the common morning office; what remains, are those parts of the evening service which differ from the morning, and the Litany. The difference between the morning and evening service consists in the hymns, which follow the two lessons, and



SERM. and in the second or third collects: in  
 XI.

other respects they are the same. The hymn appointed to follow the first lesson in the evening is that which the blessed Virgin, the mother of Jesus Christ, repeated, when in visiting her cousin Elizabeth (the mother of John Baptist) she received from her a confirmation of the tidings, which she had before heard from the angel, that she should be the parent of the expected redeemer of mankind:—  
 “ My soul doth magnify (doth adore and  
 “ reverence) the Lord, and my spirit hath  
 “ rejoiced in God my Saviour; for he  
 “ hath regarded the lowliness (the humble  
 “ condition) of his handmaiden, for lo!  
 “ from henceforth all generations shall  
 “ call me Blessed,”—shall speak of my  
 happiness, in being advanced to this high  
 dignity of being mother of the promised  
 Saviour of the world. “ For he that is  
 “ mighty hath magnified me (for the all-  
 “ powerful

" powerful God hath thus advanced me) SERM.

" and holy is his name;" praised be his  XI.

name for it. " And his mercy is on them

" that fear him throughout all generations.

" He hath shewed strength with his arm,

" he hath scattered the proud in the ima-

" gination of their hearts;" he hath con-

founded and overthrown the presumptuous

and haughty opposers of his designs, even

by means of the imaginations, the thoughts

of their own hearts. " He hath put down

" the mighty from their seats, and hath

" exalted the humble and meek." This

may relate either to the general dealings

of God with mankind, or to his present

intention in that son, to whom the virgin

was about to give birth; he will depose the

proud Jew from that lofty place which he

hath hitherto held, and will exalt the meek

Christian in his stead. " He hath filled

" the hungry with good things, and the

" rich he hath sent empty away;" he hath

advanced

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XI.

advanced the poor good man to unexpected opulence, and hath brought down the arrogant wealthy man to beggary.

“He, remembering his mercy, hath holpen

“his servant Israel, as he promised to our

“forefathers Abraham and his seed for

“ever;” he is now about to perform his

engagement to Abraham and his true de-

scendants in the birth of the Messiah:—

“In thy seed shall all the nations of the

“earth be blessed.”

Of the cause of the joy of the blessed Virgin we all partake, and therefore may

very properly (with some little allowance)

repeat this hymn; for by the birth of Jesus

Christ we are all redeemed from a state of

sin and death, and put into a condition, if

we are willing to comply with the easy

terms, of obtaining everlasting salvation.

The hymn, which we repeat after the

second lesson, is likewise taken from St.

Luke; it is the thanksgiving of Simon, a

pious



pious and good old man, who was expecting **SERM.**  
the coming of the promised saviour, and   
to whom it had been revealed that he should  
not die till he had seen the Lord Christ.  
He came by the guidance of the spirit into  
the temple, at the time when Jesus was in-  
troduced by his parents, and immediately  
being filled with the Holy Ghost, he took  
him in his arms, and said, "Lord, now lettest  
" thou thy servant depart in peace accord-  
" ing to thy word, for mine eyes have seen  
" thy salvation;" — I am content now, O  
Lord, to lay down my life, now that I have  
lived to behold, according to thy promise,  
the redeemer of mankind, "whom thou  
" hast prepared before the face of all  
" people, to be a light to lighten the Gen-  
" tiles (to guide all the nations of the  
" earth to true religion) and to be the  
" glory of thy people Israel," — to those  
of them, at least, who own Jesus to be the  
Christ. I omit to mention those other

SERM. two hymns, which it is at the minister's  
XI.  
choice to repeat instead of these, for the  
same reason that I omitted those which  
follow the morning lessons, because, I  
think, they are now rarely, if ever, used.

Of the two collects in the evening service, which differ from those of the morning, the first is for peace; we beseech God, from whom all religious thoughts, all pious suggestions, and all good actions do proceed, to pour into our hearts that peace and tranquillity, which it is not in the power of the world to bestow; that we may be fully determined to obey the divine commandments; and resting secure that we are under God's protection, may pass, quiet and undisturbed, the time of our abode here on earth. The other collect, which is peculiar to the evening service, is for God's aid and protection, in the dangers arising from darkness of mind, ignorance, and the perils, also, of the night.

I now



I now proceed, according to the plan I SERM.  
XI.  
formerly laid down, to a consideration of  
the Litany. The meaning of the word  
'Litany' is an earnest supplication to God;  
in that of ours, almost all the sins which a  
Christian should avoid, and all the graces  
which he should seek, are particularly enu-  
merated; so that it has this, added to the  
other good in it, to recommend it, that it  
serves to bring to our minds many offences,  
of which, otherwise, we might not have  
noticed that we were guilty, and admo-  
nishes us of the necessity of some virtues,  
which we might not else have known that  
we were to aim at. Most parts of it are  
very plain; I shall only speak of those few,  
with regard to which there may be any ha-  
zard of their being not understood. Those  
short ejaculations,—"Good Lord deliver us,  
"—we beseech thee to hear us, good Lord,"  
which the people are ordered to repeat at  
frequent intervals, belong to the preceding



SERM. sentences which the minister has spoken,  
<sup>XI</sup>  
and he likewise is understood to join in them; they were judged to have a better effect than if the whole supplication were repeated without any breaks, as they recall attention, which is but too apt to wander, and render the congregation, by the very act of repeating them, more warm and fervent in their petitions. The Litany opens, first, with a separate address to each person of the blessed Trinity, and then to them all jointly; these the people repeat at length after the minister. Jesus Christ is then besought, by the title of Lord, to forget our offences, and the offences of our forefathers; not to take vengeance on us for our sins, but to spare us to whom he has already shewn so much love, as to redeem us with his most precious blood. We, after this, put up our prayers against divers sins and various evils, natural and moral: the words used can scarce be made plainer

plainer by any explanation; I shall merely notice some particular phrases. The phrase, *SERM. XI.*  
'blindness of heart,' means either ignorance of God and his perfections, or self-deception, thinking ourselves superior to what we are; more wise, more religious, or more virtuous. By 'deadly sins,' we may understand such as are wilful, deliberate, and presumptuous; sins into which we are not betrayed by passion, but which we commit with our eyes open, considerately knowing them at the time to be, in the very highest degree, displeasing to God, and prejudicial to our souls. Some object to our praying against sudden death; but, surely, the generality of men have but too much reason to do it; few only have their lamps so prepared, as not to have cause to be desirous of a short space in which to trim them, before the bridegroom really arrives. But to those who may think there is little to be done in a last illness (and in-

SERM.

XI.

deed, it is to be feared, by them who trust entirely to it, that there is not much) or who may really be prepared for death at any time, and may therefore think it unnecessary to pray against being cut off suddenly, it may be replied, that if a little warning be not necessary on their own accounts, it is at least eligible on account of their friends; to take off the shock which their sudden removal might occasion, to give a short time to settle their worldly concerns (though these, as well as their spiritual, should always be in all practical readiness) and, lastly, to afford them an opportunity of giving their dying advice and example to the survivors. We pray against all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion, that is, against all traiterous designs against the king or government; we pray against all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; by 'false doctrine,' we may understand the believing or disbelieving

con-



contrary to what the scriptures contain, SERM.  
XI.  
and 'heresy' has, I think, much the same meaning; the sense of 'schism,' is division in the church; we pray against all separation among Christians, that we may all (as St. Paul advises) speak the same thing; that we may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. Having offered our petitions for deliverance from various evils, we beseech Christ to grant us what we ask, by the mystery of his holy incarnation, and by the other leading circumstances of his history, whilst he was upon earth; by 'Christ's holy incarnation,' is meant his becoming flesh, his taking upon him man's nature. When we beseech him to relieve our wants by this and the other particulars mentioned, we mean, by their means, and on their account; and the immense goodness which he shewed to the human race in them, gives us ground and foundation for our hopes of a favourable hearing.

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As we have need of the favour and protection of heaven at all seasons, we pray for it in all times of our wealth, which means prosperity,—in all times of our tribulation, which means adversity,—we being in as much real danger, perhaps, in the former state as in the latter; we pray likewise for mercy at that solemn and concluding season of our trial, “the hour of death,” and at that period, which will determine our lot for ever, “the day of judgment.” When we have thus concluded our petitions for ourselves, we proceed to enlarge and extend them in behalf of our brethren, in behalf of mankind in general; and, first, we begin by praying for God’s guidance of the holy Christian church; we then offer our supplications for our superiors, temporal and spiritual; and we conclude by presenting a variety of intercessions for all mankind, in all their principal wants, necessities, distresses, and emergencies; but this is done in so clear and plain

a man-

a manner, as to require no explanation. SERM.

XI.

The minister and people now endeavour to stir up and enliven their devotion by repeating, alternately, several short sentences, tending to beseech heaven that they may be graciously heard and answered.—Some repetitions are here made use of; but I have before observed to you, that all repetitions cannot be considered as vain, when we remember that our Saviour himself prayed three times precisely in the same words. Now follows the Lord's Prayer, and then we beg of God not to deal with us after our sins, or reward us after our iniquities: the word 'after,' being here used in an uncommon sense, it may be necessary to mention that it means in both these places—according to,—that is, treat us not according to what our sins and iniquities have deserved. The next prayer is said to have been introduced into the Litany above a thousand years ago, on some

dis-



S B M. distresses under which the Christians then  
 XI. laboured; but as all Christians labour under distresses or dangers of some kind or other, temporal or spiritual, it has a very significant meaning, and may properly be used at all times. The people at the close of this prayer, instead of the usual Amen, beg of Christ to arise, and deliver them for his name's sake, that is, for the sake of their bearing his name, the name of Christians. The minister next sets forth, that we have heard or read, or have had handed down by our forefathers, the noble works that God did for those who were his people, that is, for the Jews first, and afterwards for Christians; and the congregation then beseech him to rise and deliver them for his honour, not on account of their deserts, but of his own perfections; that from the Experience of his loving kindness all may learn to serve and adore him. We now repeat the doxology, or, in  
 other

other words, give praise and glory to the ever blessed Trinity, in the same form as we have done frequently before in other parts of the service, particularly after the Psalms; and after several short ejaculations, expressing our entreaties to God for protection and mercy, we conclude with a more continued form of prayer to the same purpose:—"We humbly beseech thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities, and for the glory of thy name turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved:"—the word 'righteously' here means—justly, that we most justly have deserved; what remains of this prayer is sufficiently clear. The conclusion of the Litany being the same as the conclusion of the morning service, it is not necessary that I should repeat what I have already said on it.

And thus I have brought my discourses on our church service to a period; in which

SERM.

XI.

which I have endeavoured to avoid the two opposite extremes of too great or too little particularity, either of hazarding to weary you by dwelling too minutely on the subject, or omitting to explain things which really require it. Would to God that I may have succeeded in any degree in rendering it more intelligible to you! Would to God that I may have succeeded in rendering it more delightful in your eyes!

Let me prevail on you to shew your delight in it by a more constant attendance at its celebration. It is with no small concern that I am compelled to say that I have too much reason to admonish you on this head. Surely once a week, for one short hour, to meet with your brethren to offer your prayers and thanksgivings to your Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, is no hard service! Can we possibly do less for that beneficent Being, who hath

done

done



done so much for us? Whatever causes **SERM.**  
of dissatisfaction you may have with the **XI.**  
manner of the service being performed,  
you cannot complain that it is not performed constantly and at the appointed hours. Would to God you would give your minister a decisive proof that you are not dissatisfied with it on other accounts, by meeting him constantly as the Sabbath returns! He can have but little reason, till he sees you do this, to congratulate himself on the success of his labours. But it is not enough that you attend regularly at divine service; you must be attentive and devout, whilst you are there, and if your thoughts will sometimes wander to earthly subjects (as they too often will) you must anxiously and speedily recall them. You will do well to be minutely exact in repeating all which the congregation is ordered to repeat, and in joining, in your hearts, in each of the prayers as they

SERM. they are read by the minister, and saying

XL

*Amen* aloud at the conclusion. You will likewise do well in observing the directions of your prayer-books, when you are to stand or kneel, and in complying exactly with them, as it shews decency of behaviour, and Christian submission to the orders of your superiors. To conclude, come as frequently to church, and behave, when you are here, with that reverence and devotion, which, when the tremendous hour of death approaches, and much more at the awful day of judgment, you will most sincerely and ardently wish that you had done. Now to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all might, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever. *Amen*.

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SERM.  
XII.

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so dreadfully within the space of seventeen  
hundred years, that God was provoked to  
overwhelm the earth with a flood of waters,  
and to destroy all flesh. One family only,  
which had remained unspotted amidst the  
general corruption, was preserved,  
and from that was the world afterwards  
peopled. We find, however, as the de-  
scendants of Noah multiplied and spread  
themselves upon the earth, that notwithstanding  
this dreadful example of God's  
vengeance on the wicked (the remembrance  
of which should be a constant warning to  
all men), yet the world continued to grow  
more and more corrupt, till at last it  
came to that pitch, that God was  
forced to send down another flood, to  
destroy all that were ungodly, and  
to cleanse the world by water, in the  
word of God.

**SERMON XII.**

**CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR AND KING.**

**ST. JOHN III. 16.**

*God so loved the world, that he gave his  
only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth  
in him should not perish, but have ever-  
lasting life.*

**W**HEN the Almighty first created man,  
he endued him with a capacity of knowing  
his duty, and with a strong inclination to  
practise it: in defiance, however, of this  
knowledge, and in contradiction to this in-  
clination, Adam fell from his obedience,  
and, by his transgression, brought, not only  
on himself, but also on his posterity, mi-  
sery and death. Wickedness, which was  
thus

**SERM.  
XII.**

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SERM.

XII.

thus introduced into the world, increased so dreadfully within the space of seventeen hundred years, that God was provoked to overwhelm the earth with a flood of waters, and to destroy all flesh. One family only, which had remained unpolluted amidst the general contagion of vice, was preserved, and from that was the world afterwards peopled. We find, however, as the descendants of Noah multiplied and spread themselves upon the earth, that, notwithstanding this dreadful example of God's vengeance on the wicked (the remembrance of which could not possibly have been soon done away) they, within a short time, began to degenerate, they forgot entirely the true God, and immersed themselves in all manner of iniquity. With the Jews, indeed, by particular revelations from heaven, and the immediate superintendence of the Almighty, the true knowledge of him was retained; but even *they* frequently turned  
aside

aside to idoltry, and were, in their moral SERM.  
conduct, desperately abandoned; while all XII.  
the other nations of the earth paid their  
devotions to stocks and stones, or to  
men wicked and frail as themselves, and  
were so far from conforming themselves  
to the obligations of virtue, that they were  
deplorably ignorant in what it consisted.

This was the state of things, when it  
pleased God "to send his only-begotten son  
" into the world, to the end that all that be-  
" lieve in him should not perish, but have  
" everlasting life." Considering the great  
and manifold provocations which God had  
received, it might have been expected that  
he would have sent his son upon a far dif-  
ferent errand, to take vengeance on such  
a rebellious race, to punish and to extirpate;  
but, no! Jesus Christ was sent to instruct  
and to save, to inform us of our duty, and  
to redeem our immortal souls; in other  
words, to be our Saviour and our King.—It

SERM. is under these two characters then that we  
 XII. will consider the Son of the Almighty.

You will observe in the text, that it is not said *absolutely* that *all* should have everlasting life through the son of God, but that all that *believe* in him; the promise of salvation and immortality is limited to believers; there is a condition annexed to it,—the believing in him through whom it is offered—which implies, that if we do not believe in him, we shall not be in the number of those who shall partake of the benefits of his coming.

It becomes then a matter of importance, to inquire what believing in Jesus is. To believe in Jesus, is to be thoroughly persuaded that he is the only-begotten son of God, that he is the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person; that he was sent into the world by God, and that the end of his appearance was to make known the will of heaven, and  
 to



to die to atone for the sins of men. All **SERM.**  
this, you will say, we are very ready to **XII.**  
do; the wonderful works which he did, and  
the angelic doctrines which he taught, speak  
for him; we acknowledge him to have been  
the Messiah, the son of the Most High!  
So far it is well; but there is yet more in  
believing in Jesus, and it will be well in-  
deed, if you can answer with equal readi-  
ness to what remains: believing in Jesus  
comprehends likewise a conviction of the  
goodness and importance of the lessons  
which he taught, and not only this, but the  
uniform and settled practice of them; with-  
out obedience to his commands, our faith  
in his divinity will be of no effect, our pro-  
fessions of it, however frequently repeated,  
will be merely solemn mockeries! it will  
be a lame, an impotent, a deficient faith,  
it will not be a faith unto salvation.

And here the other part of Christ's cha-  
racter comes to be considered, that of King;

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XII.

he came to rule as well as to save us; we must accept him in both characters, or in neither; if we refuse to be his subjects, his coming will have availed us nothing; if we will not be obedient to his laws, we shall not be entitled to his protection. Allegiance and protection are reciprocal, even between earthly monarchs and their subjects; where a man disowns the authority of the prince, he forfeits all pretensions to his care, he becomes an outlaw, and, of course, can claim no benefit from the government which he despises; how much more then must this be the case with him, who sets at nought the precepts of the son of the most high God! and yet, I fear, there are too many, who are willing enough to accept Christ as their Saviour, but cannot bring themselves to receive him as their King; who would gladly appropriate to themselves the glorious privileges which belong to his disciples, but cannot  
be

be prevailed on to comply with the essential conditions. Examine the scriptures, and you will find them uniformly asserting, that the virtues of a good life are the only terms on which we can claim to ourselves the merits of our Lord's death. St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and Christ himself, began their preaching in the same manner:—"Repent ye, or rather, "reform ye, for the kingdom of heaven is "at hand;" as if they had said, Break off your sins, and turn yourselves to a life of righteousness, that ye may be ready to receive the gospel, and may become proper objects of its privileges. Our Saviour, in the course of his ministry, commands his disciples to be exemplary in good works: "Let your light so shine before men, that "they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven." In the same discourse he says, "Except your "righteousness (that is, your practice of



SERM. " what is right ) shall exceed the righteous-

XII.

“ ness of the scribes and pharisees, ye  
“ shall, in no case, enter into the kingdom  
“ of heaven.” And to this effect you will  
find the constant language both of our Lord  
and his apostles. Nor indeed could it in  
reason be otherwise; eternal life was ori-  
ginally meant for those only, who had no  
taint or infection of sin whatever, for God  
is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;  
therefore, after the fall of Adam, and the  
consequent degeneracy of his posterity, all  
mankind became obnoxious to the wrath of  
God, and had he not mercifully found out  
a way to reconcile them to himself, they  
could never have hoped to become objects  
of his favour. He, however, out of his  
boundless benevolence, did find out a way,  
he sent his only son upon earth to die  
for them. But, can it be thought that he  
intended, by so doing, to leave them en-  
tirely under the dominion of their vicious  
passions?

passions? Can it be thought, that from SERM.  
XII.  
that time it was his design to bestow eternal happiness upon them, without any exertions of their own whatever? that they who, in a state of nature, were only to be accepted on perfect obedience, in a state of grace had nothing to do but to sit down, to eat, to drink, and to be merry;—to be as wicked as passion transported, or temptation invited them? The very idea is a derogation from the purity of God.

The original law given to man was —  
'Obey and live, —transgress and die;' by the Christian law, the severity of this first law is mitigated; but to whom is it mitigated? not to those who continue in their transgressions until their death, but to those, who by a timely repentance establish themselves in such habits, as may appease the displeasure of the Almighty, and render them fit companions for the blessed saints above. Without the acquisition of virtuous

SERM.

XII.

habits (which can alone be gained by the constant practice of virtue, and the sincere love of it) we should not only be totally unworthy of the society of heavenly spirits, but absolutely unable to partake of their happiness, were it possible we could intrude ourselves amongst them.

Christianity, no less than the religion of nature, commands from her votaries perfection; but here is the difference between the two — the latter accepts of nothing but a perfection, which is absolute; while, through Christ, the earnest and constant endeavours of his disciples will be accepted, however short they may fall of success. This is a point, which requires well to be understood. Christ came upon earth to save us from the rigour of divine justice, which can take up with nothing but an un-sin-ning obedience; but an un-sin-ning obedience is what no man ever arrives at; we should all therefore, but for Christ, be exposed



posed to the wrath of God; on our sincere *endeavours*, however, Christ interposes, and protects us; the *will*, through him, will be taken for the *deed*; but if we do not *endeavour*, his sufferings and death will, as far as concerns us, have been in vain. SERM.  
XII.

But besides those who are desirous to accept Christ as their Saviour, though not willing to receive him as their King, there are others who renounce him in both characters,—who either neglect to examine into the justice of his pretensions, or, taking some offence at his life and doctrine, altogether refuse to acknowledge him. It is not, I believe, uncommon for persons of this kind to reason thus:—Faith, say they, is not an act of the will, it is an act of the understanding; we would believe, if we could see reason, but we really cannot, and therefore, though the gospel should be true, we hope to meet with pardon.—But, I say, supposing the  
gospel

SERM. gospel to be true, which it certainly is,  
XII.  these hopes are entirely fallacious; for God has doubtless given us every proof of its truth, which is necessary, in reason, to convince us; and if, notwithstanding, we reject it, it must proceed from obstinacy, pride, or some other bad passion; well, therefore, may the apostle say—"If our " gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are " lost."

Let us then believe in the gospel, and let us endeavour to live up to its commands, for we may be assured that the day will come when the profane infidel will be terribly convinced of the criminality of his indolence and obstinacy,—the day will come, when it will sorely repent him of the scoffs which he has thrown out against our holy religion, and the contempt with which he has treated its professors; then shall he call on the mountains and rocks to fall on him, and to hide him from the  
face

face of his Judge who sitteth on the throne ; SERM.  
of him, whom he rejected as his Saviour, XII.  
and despised as his King ; then perhaps,  
when the last trumpet shall have awakened  
him from the dead, shall he say—‘ Yonder  
‘ cometh that Jesus, whose name I blas-  
‘ phemed, whose merits I denied, whose  
‘ mediation and protection I superciliously  
‘ refused ; but, ah ! how unlike to what he  
‘ was described at his first coming ! no  
‘ longer the son of humble parents—the  
‘ companion of the wretched—the servant  
‘ of the lowly,—but surrounded with my-  
‘ riads of angels—clothed in the majesty  
‘ of the great God—the Prince of the uni-  
‘ verse—the Judge of all men—the ter-  
‘ rible, the unpitying avenger of his ene-  
‘ mies ! ’

SERMON





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## SERMON XIII.

### ORIGIN OF EVIL.

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#### LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH iii. 32, 33.

*For though he cause grief, yet will he have  
compassion according to the multitude of  
his mercies.*

*For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve  
the children of men.*

THE misery of human life has been the SERM.  
XIII.  
universal complaint of all ages and of all  
ranks of men; the high as well as the low,  
the rich as well as the poor, equally confess  
and lament that permanent happiness is no  
where to be found. Of the justice of this  
com-

SERM. XIII. complaint we may be convinced, both

from what we may observe passing around us, and also from our own experience:—disappointment in the pursuit, and dissatisfaction in the possession of the objects of their desire;—losses, sicknesses, and disgraces, are some or other of them the portion of almost the whole of mankind. The observation of this constitution of human affairs has afforded occasion, to some, to disbelieve in the being of a God; and to others, to arraign his goodness: and even of those whose presumption does not carry them such daring lengths, it has driven too many into discontent and despondency—highly unbecoming of them, both as men and as Christians.

I propose, in this discourse, first, to endeavour to clear up the difficulty of the existence of misery, and to reconcile it with the benevolence of the great Creator and Governor of all things; and, secondly, to



to point out the unreasonableness and ingratitude of discontent and despondency. SERM.  
XIII.

I will endeavour to clear up the difficulty of the existence of misery, and to reconcile it with the benevolence of God.

When man was first created, he was created innocent and happy; had he and his posterity persevered in their innocence, their happiness had still been continued to them — neither misery nor death would have found entrance into the world. To try his obedience, a certain condition was proposed; — the favour of his Maker was promised him on his observing it — the punishment of its violation was death. — Seduced by the artifices of the grand deceiver, and abusing the gift of free will, with which God had endowed him, he fell; he transgressed the law which was imposed on him—he ate of the tree, whereof it had been commanded him that he should not eat; and, by his transgression, entailed on himself and his posterity—woe and death.

If

SERM.

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which we see in the world, as we are assured by the Bible that it is, it is clear that they cannot be charged on God; he created man happy—he gave him an easy law to obey—he told him what terrible consequences would follow, if he broke this law:—yet, with his eyes open, he voluntarily *did* break it; therefore himself alone can he justly blame for all the dreadful effects of his rebellion. But still further—as unhappiness was not the original lot of mankind, so neither shall it be the final lot:—sin and misery entered into the world by Adam, but it was not God's intention that they should reign there forever—he has opened a way, by the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, for the penitent part of his subjects to regain his favour—to recover the dignity of their natures—and to be again, what they were at first created in Paradise, innocent and happy. Surely—this is a consideration which

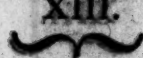
which will not only vindicate the goodness of God from any impeachment, but will exhibit it even in a more amiable light, than if man had never offended nor been condemned. Reflect—you were created happy, by your own faults you became miserable; your Creator, notwithstanding, redeemed you from this state; he bought you with a price, and, merciful God! with what a price—even with the blood of his only Son—and the only penance for your guilt is a mixture of misery with happiness, in that short interval which passes between the cradle and the grave.

But, to set this matter in a still stronger light, there is much reason to believe that those sufferings, to which we are exposed in this world, are absolutely necessary for the recovery of that perfection, in which we were first created, and for the regaining of that dignity and purity which we forfeited by the fall: this conclusion is supported



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by many passages in scripture, wherein the Almighty is introduced, expressing his unwillingness to afflict the children of men, and assigning their improvement in goodness and holiness, as the reason and ground of his chastisements. It is likewise confirmed by what we read of past ages, and what we see in our own: the best and most virtuous characters, which history, either sacred or profane, hath handed down to us, were, generally speaking, those who were most exercised in afflictions; and we cannot but, ourselves, have observed the tendency of prosperity to corrupt, — of adversity, to purify the heart; what is true of individuals, is probably true of the whole; we have, therefore, a presumptive proof that the misery, which was introduced by sin, is absolutely necessary to bring us back to virtue; and thus the afflictions, with which God visits his children, become the highest favours, — his severest

chas-

chastisements, the most tender mercies. **SERM.**

**XIII.**

Upon the whole, I trust that the goodness of God will stand clearly vindicated; we were created happy at first, till by our own fault we became miserable; it will again be our own fault, [if we are not happy at the last; God desires it, and has graciously invented a way to bring it about: and still farther, the sublunary cares and sorrows to which we are, in the mean time, liable, are the necessary steps to our restoration.

Having thus shewn that the miseries, which are to be met with in human life, are no impeachment of the benevolence of the Almighty, I now proceed to what I proposed in the second place, to point out the unreasonableness and ingratitude of discontent and despondency. Each of those arguments, which I have been using, to free from imputation the goodness of God in permitting or inflicting evils, is equally efficacious to silence the murmurs of those

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XIII.

individuals, to whose lot they fall: they were not originally designed for us, but having been introduced by the folly and guilt of our first ancestor, they are necessary and unavoidable; and not only so, but they are in a high degree salutary and medicinal; and if we make that use of them, which we are expected to make and may make, if we are so disposed, they will be the means of our restoration to our original dignity and happiness; they will endure but for a moment, and will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Here I might rest the cause; the above considerations are alone sufficient to prove the injustice of discontent and despondency, in any situation, however miserable; but there is yet more that may be said, which will place it in still more glaring colours.

Though it must be allowed, that some portion of misery will fall to the share of all men; that no prudence, virtue, or good fortune,



fortune, can entirely escape it; yet I believe that it may be assumed, and will hold true for the most part, that the hours which we spend in ease and happiness are greatly superior, in number, to those which are passed in misery and pain. Even in this life, there are many positive pleasures that the virtuous enjoy, which, generally speaking, far overbalance their woes. Let us view our condition with impartial eyes, and be just to the bounty of heaven. Happiness, even on earth, is sown with no scanty hand, if we have but the disposition to reap it. Ungrateful as we are, we number and exaggerate our sorrows, while we suffer our various enjoyments to pass unheeded! Do we count as nothing the comforts which arise from the constant intercourse with our Maker by religion, the satisfaction of an approving conscience, and the hopes of eternal felicity, through the merits and death of our Redeemer? Heavy

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SERM.  
XIII.

indeed must be the calamities that can outweigh these solid blessings, which all, if it be not their own fault, may enjoy. Others there are of an inferior order indeed, but which by no means deserve to be overlooked. Do we count as nothing the enjoyment of health, the innocent gratifications of sense, the contemplation of the various beauties of the universe, the satisfaction of internal thought and reflection, the pleasures of conversation and society, and the endearing intercourse of domestic love? How we deserved these *notthings*, it would be difficult for us to say, which ought alone to repress our complaints when they are withdrawn from us. Of some indeed, and these much the most valuable, we cannot be deprived but by ourselves, and if we will but retain *these*, they will amply compensate and console us for the loss of the others. These are, therefore, many positive pleasures in this life, the greatest of which

which *all* either do or might enjoy; pleasures which, for the most part, far exceed, both in duration and weight, the proportion of woes which are intermixed with them. Is it not then the highest ingratitude, after we have been, for a long time, experiencing great and unmerited favours at the hands of God, if the scene a little varies and presents us with darker prospects, to be impatient and discontented?

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But still farther, if the matter be accurately examined, we shall find that many of the evils, which are the subject of our hasty complaints, are brought on us by our own imprudence: disappointments frequently arise from unreasonable expectations; that degree of poverty, which is highly oppressive and disgraceful, is the general product of idleness; sickness is, in many instances, caused by intemperance; the loss of reputation, by vice or folly: in these cases, shame, one would think, should



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silence our murmurs, and prevent us from attributing to the constitution of human affairs, what is only to be imputed to ourselves.

Instances indeed may be met with, where the misery of particular individuals greatly overbalance their happiness, and where, perhaps, it could have been prevented by no exertions of prudence or of virtue: those, however, to whose lot this may fall, are not (as I have shewn in the beginning of this discourse) without abundant reasons for consolation; though woe be their present portion, it will arise from their own negligence, if it be not converted into bliss; heaviness may endure for a night, but, by patience and piety, joy cometh in the morning.

Let us then enjoy, with moderation and gratitude, the bounties of God, and let us submit with manly firmness to his chastisements; let us esteem them, as they are,

but

but as different modes of his goodness; let us understand them, as they are meant, as trials of our virtue and correctors of our hearts; and let us rest assured, that if we carry ourselves under them with truly religious resignation, we shall entitle ourselves to the benediction pronounced by our Saviour on those who mourn; and at the great day of retribution shall, in return for transitory pain and sorrow, be recompensed with an eternity of bliss and glory.

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XIII.

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 as understand them as they are meant as  
 trials of our virtue and correctors of our  
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 ligious resignation, we shall entitle our-  
 selves to the benediction pronounced by  
 our Saviour on those who mourn; and at  
 the great day of tribulation shall, in re-  
 turn for transient pain and sorrow, be re-  
 compensated with an eternity of bliss and  
 glory.



## SERMON XIV.

THE IMPROPRIETY OF JUDGING OF THE  
MISFORTUNES OF OTHERS.

ST. LUKE xiii. 3.

*I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye  
shall all likewise perish.*

THE occasion on which these words were SERM.  
XIV.  
spoken, was this; it had just been related  
to our Saviour, that Pilate, the Roman go-  
vernor, had mingled the blood of some Ga-  
lileans with their sacrifices, i. e. that he had  
put them to death whilst they were sacri-  
ficing at the altar; from which account Je-  
sus takes an opportunity (as was usual with  
him on most occurrences) to inculcate on  
his

SERM.  
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his followers some useful religious instruction. "Suppose ye (says he) that these  
"Galileans were sinners above all the Ga-  
"lileans, because they suffered such things?  
"I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent,  
"ye shall all likewise perish."

Two instructive lessons are to be drawn from hence; first, that when we see misfortunes fall on our neighbours, it is very wrong in us to interpret them into judgments—to conclude that they have happened to them on account of their sins; and, secondly, that the right use to make of them would be (without considering them at all as relating to others, or endeavouring to pry curiously into God's dispensations) to apply them to ourselves, to take warning by them, and to break off our sins by repentance, lest the same, or worse, calamities overtake us.

Our Saviour well knew the heart of man; for it is certain that we are very  
much

much inclined to assign the sufferings which others undergo, to some sins, either open or secret, of which they have been guilty: whether it be that we are induced to it from a desire of attributing our own exemption from the same misfortunes to our innocence, or whether we are flattered with appearing to understand God's dispensations, or whether we think it a mark of piety to censure those whom the Almighty afflicts; — the fact is, that it is greatly the custom among men, when any one is attacked by some remarkable calamity, to be immediately searching for, and endeavouring to discover, the occasion of it in his iniquities. From whatever cause this practice proceeds, it is very presumptuous and unreasonable, and not only so, but it is most probably in general unjust; since our Saviour peremptorily denies that any such conclusions can, with certainty, be collected: — “ Suppose ye that  
“ these



SERM. "these Galileans were sinners above all  
 XIV. "the Galileans, because they suffered such  
 "things; or those eighteen upon whom  
 "the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them,"  
 (alluding to another late occurrence)  
 "think ye that they were sinners above  
 "all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I  
 "tell you, Nay."

If we look into the history of past times, we shall find that many of those characters, who endured the greatest calamities, so far from being more wicked than those who lived at the same time, were eminently distinguished for their piety and virtue; and yet, even some of these were reproached for suffering in consequence of their sins. The misfortunes of Job, you know, were caused by his virtue; it was that which drew on him the envy and malice of the devil; yet his friends, seeing what he underwent, although they could not, with all their ill-natured penetration, discover

discover any open stain in his life and manners, and, although they had been witnesses of his continued piety and uprightness, yet they would have it that he was vicious in secret; that, though his actions were apparently virtuous, his principles and his heart were corrupt. When, after the shipwreck of St. Paul, the viper fastened on his hand, how ready were the people amongst whom he was, to cry out, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." They looked when he should have experienced the usual effects of the bite of a venomous beast, "when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead." So, likewise, on meeting with the man that was blind from his birth, the disciples of our Saviour asked him, "Master, who did this sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"—so closely did they connect together

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gether sin and misfortune; but Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him;" that is, "that I might have an opportunity of proving to you that I am a messenger sent from God, by working his cure;"—which he accordingly did.

Indeed there are so many reasons, for which misfortunes may fall on a person besides his sins, that candour should always prevent us from putting upon them that construction. Had there, indeed, been no wickedness among men, there had been no misery; they entered the world together; every man has done something towards perpetuating both, and yet it can by no means be concluded, that when any person suffers more intensely, he hath therefore sinned more enormously than his fellows.

God sometimes permits afflictions to come upon us, as a trial of our faith and  
patience



patience, to give us an opportunity of displaying hidden virtues, both for own advantage, and the edification of others; sometimes, perhaps, he singles us out from the herd of sinners, to set us as a warning, that others, being spectators of our sorrows, may be brought to reflection and repentance, lest the same or worse evils should fall on them; but nothing from this can be inferred, but that the sufferer, as a man, is a sinner, not that he has sinned more deeply than other men.

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We are told in the second commandment, that God sometimes "visits the sins of the fathers upon the children even unto the third and fourth generation;" a man, therefore, in affliction may be doing penance, not for his own iniquities, but for those of his remote ancestors.

There may indeed be instances, where the suffering is so evidently the effect of

S.E.R.M.

XIV.

the crime, or answers so exactly to it, that it is impossible not to see the connexion between them: thus, when the drunkard perishes by his intemperance, or the libertine by his sensuality, their fate may justly be looked upon not only as the consequence, but as the punishment, of their vices; thus when dogs licked the blood of Ahab in the same place, in which they had before licked that of Habeth, whom Ahab had unjustly put to death; or when Adonibezek was the object of the same species of cruelty, which he practised on so many kings; in both these cases the correspondence between the crimes and the sufferings was so remarkable, that it might, without hesitation, be deemed the work of God. But then it is to be observed, here the sins were *known*, and not *presumed*; and it was not necessary to say, 'There men suffer greatly, and therefore we conclude they have sinned greatly;' but, 'we already know

*the Misfortunes of others.*

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XIV.

‘ know they have been guilty of great sins,  
‘ to which their sufferings have so exactly  
‘ answered, that we cannot but look on  
‘ them as judgments.’ Yet even in such  
instances as these, it is more decent to  
leave it to the afflicted person himself to  
draw the conclusion, which, in general, his  
own conscience is ready enough to do.  
“ As I have done (says Adonibezek) so  
“ God hath requited me.”

Having thus shewn that it is a custom  
among men to ascribe signal misfortunes  
to signal sins, and that this custom is  
very unreasonable, and in general very un-  
just, it may be useful to inquire from  
what cause it arises; this leads me to the  
second instructive lesson which the text  
contains, namely, that we ought to ap-  
ply the sufferings of others to ourselves,  
and break off our sins by repentance, lest  
we also perish.



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The consciousness of sin, and the dread of the effects of it are so extremely burdensome, that the wicked are in general very desirous to persuade themselves that they are less guilty than they really are; and as their conscience will not permit them to imagine that they are absolutely innocent, they are very eager to flatter themselves, that they are comparatively so; hence for the most part arises the desire to discover and to aggravate the faults of other men; and as there can be no clearer proof of a man's being enormously wicked, than his being declared so by heaven, there is a certain eagerness to interpret the calamities of our brethren into judgments, and thence to flatter ourselves, because we have escaped the like, that we are therefore comparatively virtuous. But this our Saviour tells us is a very false conclusion, and a far different consequence from that which we ought to draw

draw on such occasions: "Suppose ye that **SERM.**

"these Galileans were sinners above all **XIV.**

"the Galileans, because they suffered such

"things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye

"repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Ye

are not to imagine that greater temporal

sufferings peculiarly belong to greater sins;

ye are not to consider them at all in this

light; but ye are to take warning by them,

and hasten to forsake your own iniquities,

lest the same or worse evils overtake you.

It is very absurd and unreasonable to

flatter ourselves with the belief, that be-

cause we have escaped those afflictions,

which we have seen fall on others, we are

therefore innocent, and free from danger:

for, supposing it true that these sufferers

were certainly greater sinners than we are,

we cannot argue from this that we are

no sinners at all; it ought rather to put us

on examining ourselves, on repenting of

our iniquities, and reforming our lives,

SERM. lest we also be involved in similar judgments. But the argument is greatly strengthened, when we reflect on what is probably true, that those who have suffered were not more guilty than ourselves; nay, perhaps, that they were holy and virtuous persons. This latter supposition, which we know to be just in many instances, is a most awakening warning to us, to fly from our sins, for if this has been done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry! If this has been the lot of those, whom God loves, what shall be the portion of those, whom he hates!—if judgment begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear!

No rational person, I should think, can hear of the terrible torments, which the first martyrs to our religion underwent—holy and good men—who spent their whole lives in serving God, and endured death in its most terrible shapes rather than



than forsake him,—no reasonable person <sup>SERM.</sup>  
can think of this, and not apprehend, that <sup>XIV.</sup>  
if men of this character, such peculiar fa-  
vourites of heaven, suffered so much, how  
far greater sufferings must be in store for  
the impenitently wicked! Many grievous  
sinners have enjoyed great and uninterru-  
pted prosperity in this world; and many  
righteous persons have passed their whole  
lives in tribulation and distress; but in the  
world to come the scene will be directly  
reversed; those who have received their  
evil things, and have carried themselves  
patiently and piously, shall be comforted;  
those who have received their good things,  
and who have been ungrateful and irreligi-  
ous, shall be tormented.

From what has been said then, I should  
hope that the propriety and wisdom of this  
mode of conduct is clear and evident; that  
when we see our brethren in tribula-  
tion, it is not for us to aggravate their dis-

**SERM.** tress by imputing it to their iniquities; it  
**XIV.** does not at all concern us to pry curiously  
into the matter; but, instead of doing this,  
we are to think of ourselves, to take war-  
ning, to relinquish our evil ways, and  
amend our lives, since we have the word of  
our Saviour, that, " unless we repent, we  
" shall all likewise perish."

**SERMON**

**SERMON XV.**

**THE SINS OF MEN NOT CHARGEABLE ON GOD.**

**1 JAMES i. 13, 14.**

*Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; — for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

**I**T happens, I believe not unfrequently, that those who are guilty of any great degrees of wickedness, charge their guilt, either immediately or by implication, upon God; they either reflect on Providence, for having

**SERM.  
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SERM. ing placed them in such situations and cir-  
 XV.  
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cumstances, that to avoid sin was not in their power — or, for having given them such violent and headstrong passions, that their reason was utterly unable to contend with them. To something, either external or internal, which it depended not on themselves to order otherwise, they would willingly impute their depravity. But this the apostle St. James, in the words which I have just read, tells us is very unjust, inasmuch as it is very untrue; — “ Let no
 “ man say, when he is tempted, I am
 “ tempted of God; — for God cannot be
 “ tempted with evil, neither tempteth he
 “ any man: but every man is tempted,
 “ when he is drawn away of his own lust,
 “ and enticed.” Think not to excuse yourselves, when ye give way to temptations, by attributing your fall to the Almighty; for as God cannot be tempted to commit evil himself, so neither certainly would
 he

he be the instrument of exciting it in his creatures; but rather believe, what is evidently the case, that it is your own evil passions and desires, by which ye are led astray.

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Here are two assertions — first, that God is not, cannot be, the author of our sins; — secondly, that they arise from ourselves. Let us examine if this be not really the case. — That God is not the author of sin, St. James assigns this as a reason — it is impossible he should be tempted to evil himself, and therefore it is not credible he should be the cause of it in his creatures. — Both the light of nature and the scriptures concur in representing the Almighty as a Being of infinite purity; he is the author of all that is right and good — he is, in himself, absolutely perfect — he has neither desires nor fears, and consequently cannot be tempted, for the gratification of the one, or, under the influence of the other, to a devia-

SERM. deviation from the exact line of goodness:

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but he is not only good in himself—he is also an ardent lover of it in his creatures; or, to express the same in other words, he is an hater of all manner of evil—he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Add to this, that he is constantly set forth, in the scriptures, as anxious for the salvation of mankind;—"He would not that any should
"perish, but that all should come to re-
"pentance; he desireth not the death of
"a sinner, but rather that he should turn
"from his wickedness and live." Now

let me ask you—is it likely, or rather, is it not impossible, that such a Being as this, infinitely holy himself—of purer sight than to tolerate vice in his creatures—and likewise greatly desirous of the happiness of all men—should himself be the means of enticing them into wickedness, which, in its issue, unavoidably leadeth to destruction?—No—it is not likely—it is impossible;

sible;—ye cannot but own it. But yet you will say, there seem to be several places, in scripture, in which God is described (at least so it appears to you) as instigating or over-ruling men to the perpetration of wicked actions;—to this I reply—consider all those places carefully, and examine accurately who the persons are, whom you think God is described as leading to wickedness, and you will find that they are not good and virtuous persons, but persons already impious and depraved; so that God does not tempt them originally from righteousness; but, as a punishment for their having already deserted it, he gives them up to their own depravity. Consider the case of Pharaoh;—the Lord is often said to harden his heart to prevent his permitting the children of Israel to depart out of Egypt; but this was not before he had hardened his own heart, and it means therefore not that God infused

bad

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bad qualities into him, but that he gave him up to those he already had, he withdrew from him the sense of his guilt and folly, and left him to himself, as a fit recompense for his prior obstinacy.

By the way, I should observe to you, that it is sometimes translated in our Bible, —“ he hardened Pharaoh’s heart,” when it should be, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, so that in those places, it is manifest it was not God’s doing, but his own; but it cannot mean, at any event, that God was actually the cause of his guilt.

Again, it is said, with respect to those nations of the Canaanites, who were extirpated by the children of Israel after their wanderings in the wilderness, it is said of them, that it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly; but what is the meaning of this? Surely, that as a punishment
for

for their former iniquities, the measure of **SERM.**
which was now full—iniquities, which arose **XV.**
not from God, but from themselves, providence did justly bring them into such circumstances as proved fatal to them.

In one word, we must never explain one or two detached passages of scripture, in such a manner as to make them contradict all the rest of it; when we are not able to reconcile them, we must attribute it to our own defect of understanding, which certainly is its true source. The scriptures every where assure us of the infinite holiness of God; it is impossible, therefore, that such a Being should be the author of any thing so foul as sin; and if there be passages, which appear at first sight to make him so, we must diligently examine them, and instantly acquiesce and rejoice in any other manner of interpreting them.

I have mentioned one way, in which God is sometimes represented in the scriptures
as

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as tempting men, which is, when he suffers them to fall into circumstances disadvantageous to virtue, as a punishment for former iniquities; when, because they have already hardened themselves, he vouchsafes not to afford the influence of his holy spirit to soften them: but there is yet another way, in which God sometimes tempts men, and that is, when he brings them or suffers them to fall into trials, which he foresees they will overcome; and thus gives them opportunities of displaying their own virtue, and of contributing to his glory, and the edification of others. You are before me, I doubt not, in adverting to the case of Job; into what severe trials of his integrity did he fall! But God certainly would not have permitted this—would not have given up so holy a personage to the attacks of his malicious enemy, had he not foreseen that he would sustain them victorious. Now a temptation of this kind does not conduce

to

to sin but to righteousness; it is intended SERM.
XV.
as a favour to those to whose lot it falls, it is proportioned to their strength of resisting it; it is seldom above what they are able to bear; when it is insuperable by their own exertions, God affords them an additional measure of his grace to assist them.

Those temptations then, to which men, who have hitherto been deserving, fall a sacrifice, never arise from God: this was the first thing which I was to prove; I come now to the second, that they have their origin in ourselves;—"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Our sins are chargeable on ourselves.

It is observable, that after the apostle has exculpated God from being the author of temptation, he does not impute it to the devil, but to mankind themselves. That, however, there is such an evil spirit, who goes about seeking whom he may seduce

SERM. and destroy, and who is allowed, to a cer-
XV. tain degree, to entice the sons of men to
evil, is, I think, very evident from various
parts of holy writ: he entered into Judas to
encourage him in the design, in which he
had engaged, of betraying our Saviour;—
he filled the heart of Ananias to lie to
the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of
the price for which he had sold his estate,
when he pretended that he had given in the
whole sum. But here we may remark, that
this power is never ascribed to the devil in
scripture, but in the case of great and hor-
rid sins, which men had either formerly
committed, or of which they were now en-
tertaining designs; in both these instances
which I have mentioned, it is said that the
sinner had conceived intentions of his
wicked project before it is said that the de-
vil entered into him to push him to the ex-
ecution of it. And indeed this seems to be
the case, men first desert themselves, and
then

then God deserts them; they treacherously destroy reason and conscience, the two guards which he has given them to protect them from evil, and then he interferes not to prevent the devil from entering into them; that evil spirit then takes possession, but not before the habitation is swept and garnished for his reception.

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We ourselves are our greatest enemies; no such formidable perils await us from any other quarter; God is our friend, and is earnestly desirous of our happiness; nor can the devil approach us without our having first laid ourselves open, and encouraged, in a manner, his attacks.

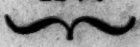
Let us then fear no dangers from God, but expect all assistance, if we do but endeavour to deserve it; neither let us be depressed by any apprehensions of the devil, for, unless by our own voluntary weakness, he will not be suffered to do us any injury. Let us place our chief guard on ourselves;

SERM. let us exert our utmost vigilance against
 XV.  our own evil passions; it is these, which being pampered by indulgence, and suffered to gain dominion over us by habit, can alone destroy us.

It is in vain that we impute our guilt either to the general depravity of human nature, or to our own particular situation; such excuses will not be suffered to avail us. With respect to the first indeed, allowance will probably be made for it, but then it will be on the supposition that we have used every effort to subdue it; and we must remember likewise, what aid we have been promised from heaven to assist us; if we do not succeed, at least in a degree, we may be sure that we have not done all that was in our power.

With regard to any particular situation, and the fancied difficulties, with which our virtue may have to contend, let us recollect that the whole of human life is a state
 of

of probation ; that no temptations have be-
fallen us but such as are common to man ;
that those trials which we meet with, are
such as are allotted us by our Creator, and
that it is in combating and subduing these
that our spiritual warfare consists. We
are not to say, if we had been born rich or
powerful, if such or such misfortunes had
not befallen us, if we had not been entang-
led in such or such unfavourable circum-
stances, we should, in that case, have re-
tained our integrity ; no—we are to do our
duty in that state, in which it has pleased
God to place us, assured that thus alone we
can work out our salvation.

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sermon
on the mount

of perfection; that no persons have been
called us but such as are common to man;
that those trials which we meet with are
such as are allotted us by our Creator and
that it is in combating and subduing these
that our spiritual warfare consists. We
are not to say, if we had been born rich or
powerful, if such or such misfortune had
not befallen us, if we had not been engaged
in such or such disadvantageous circum-
stances, we should, in that case, have re-
tained our integrity; no—we are in the same
duty in that state as when it has pleased
God to place us, assured that this alone we

SERMON XVI.

SINS OF MEN ARISING FROM A WANT OF
THE FEAR OF GOD,
AND THE INSTIGATIONS OF THE DEVIL.

PROV. XVI. LATTER PART OF V. 6.

*By the fear of the Lord men depart from
evil.*

THE wickedness, which is so prevalent SERM.
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amongst the human race, owes its existence to various causes; there are, however, two which have a more general and extensive influence than the rest; one of them, more particularly, in a greater or less degree, enters into the production of every
Q 4 crime.

SERM. crime. These two causes are, a want of a
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due apprehension of the Almighty, and, the instigation of the devil. The legislature of our country, on account of their great pre-eminence, has singled them out as giving rise to all these enormities, which require the interposition of the law: when the culprit stands charged with a breach of the public tranquility, it is stated, you know, in the indictment, that he had not the fear of God before his eyes, and was seduced by the instigation of the devil.

It shall be my endeavour, in this discourse, to prove that these causes, and more particularly the first, are the only origin, not only of these enormities, which are of that magnitude and notoriety to call for human punishment, but of every other deviation from innocence, however slight or secret.

And first, I assert, that all guilt arises from the want of a due fear of the Almighty;
this

this is the prime and grand cause of it. SERM.
The fear of God is frequently described XVI.
in the scriptures as wisdom, as understanding, as righteousness, that is, as being productive of all these in the person with whom it resides; and, certainly, when it is entertained in that degree, which the majesty and sanctity of the object demands, such effects cannot but flow from it. For consider who God is, and what are his chief qualities; he is the creator and governor of the universe, he who spake, and it was done,—commanded, and it was made fast;—he is a Being of infinite power, he is present every where, and privy to our most secret transactions. If we had these ideas constantly before our eyes, is it possible that we should ever dare to affront him by our iniquities? He made us, I said; he has therefore a title to govern us, he has a right to our unlimited obedience; he is holiness itself, and therefore of purer eyes than to behold

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behold iniquity; he delights in virtue, and he hates vice with the most perfect hatred; he has strongly commanded the one, and forbidden the other; and has solemnly assured us, that he will reward or punish us according as we are guilty or innocent: this, as we cannot doubt his ability, so neither can we doubt his will to perform; and as he is every where present, a spectator of our most secret actions, we cannot possibly form a hope of escaping detection. Now if this be the case, as it certainly is, is it not evident, when we fall into the commission of any sin, either that the fear of God is removed from before our eyes, or, which amounts to the same, that we do not entertain true notions of him? Is it possible, otherwise, that the transient gratification of a moment, the hope of any riches or honours that this world can afford (which, when acquired, we may be deprived of immediately, and, at the best, must

must surrender so soon) could tempt us into wickedness? I think it is not possible; SERM.
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I think, if we had constantly before us an inspecting and avenging God, the hater and punisher of all unrighteousness; one who is able to cast both body and soul into hell, and who has solemnly denounced that awful menace against impenitent sinners, I think it must have an effectual influence on our lives and conversations. But, instead of this, we are too apt to thrust away ideas of this kind, too apt to banish them from our hearts, as interrupters and disturbers of our gaiety, or, what has the same effect, to impair and weaken their impression, by encouraging false notions of their object.

There is a particular scepticism in too many, with regard to the attributes of God; they doubt whether he possesses some qualities in that extent, in which reason and scripture assure us that he does; they
partly

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partly persuade themselves that his presence is not so universal as it is represented, or that he does not condescend to regard so minutely the concerns of such a creature as man; they flatter themselves with hopes, besides, that he will not be so rigidly just as they have been taught to imagine; infinitely powerful, infinitely good, they are willing to allow him; but they persuade themselves, that this latter attribute will restrain him in the exercise of his justice, and reflecting how frail a creature man is, and how apparently great the number of unrepenting sinners, they would fain believe that they shall find safety in consideration of their frailty and their numbers. But if they did not endeavour to deceive themselves, they could never reason in this manner; the omnipresence of God is a tenet even of natural religion, which is fully confirmed by revelation: nothing is so secret as to escape his inspection. — “He is
“ about

“ about our path, and about our bed, and
“ spieth out all our ways; ” nothing is so
inconsiderable as to be beneath his regard;
it extends even to the hairs of our head,
all of which are numbered. Neither let us
buoy ourselves up, and impair the influence
which the fear of God would otherwise
have, by imputing our iniquities to our na-
tural frailty, when we recollect what aids
we are promised, and by what inducements
we are incited to overcome it. An all-
powerful Being will assist us, and there-
fore we cannot fail, if our endeavours are
sincere, of being victorious, and eternal
glory and happiness will be the reward of
our conquest: all pleas of difficulty and
inability vanish before these considerations.
But God is good, you have said, infinitely
good, and, therefore, will never doom to
endless destruction such a multitude of ap-
parently impenitent sinners as we see
around us. Do not rely upon this; you
are

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SERM. are a very improper judge of the extent of
 XVI. your neighbour's guilt; it may be attended
 with extenuating circumstances, which you,
 who reason in this manner, well know is
 not the case with your own; he may be in
 a state of salvation, however it may appear
 otherwise to you; think not, therefore, to
 find safety in saying, 'I see all around me as
 bad as myself,' since you are very probably
 deceived, and if you are not, it is the height
 of absurdity to suppose that the vicious
 will find protection in their numbers.

The motives to the fear of God are so
 strong, that it is, I think, manifest that (un-
 less they drive it assiduously from their
 minds, or impair its influence by false rea-
 soning on the object of it) men could not be
 so frequently betrayed into the commission
 of gross wickedness: but when this is once
 done, another cause of vice begins to ope-
 rate,—the instigation of the devil! When
 that impregnable shield, a due apprehension
 of

of the Almighty, is removed, we become SERM.
naked and exposed to the fiery darts of our XVI.
wicked adversary. 

The want of the fear of God is the prime cause of unrighteousness, the other is only subordinate; God suffers us not to be tempted above what we are able to resist, till we have cast off our veneration for him; he does not desert us, until we have first deserted ourselves; great as the envy and malice of our enemy are, he dares not molest us while he sees us subordinate to the authority, and protected by the superintendence of an Almighty leader; it is no wonder that he then commences his attacks so soon as he perceives us defenceless.

This grand deceiver may perhaps have it in his power to influence our conduct two ways; he may either lead us into temptation by bringing us into situations unfavourable to our virtue; or he may represent things in false and deceitful colours: the
scrip-

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scripture gives an account of both; it describes the devil as the author of all those misfortunes which fell on Job, with the express design of tempting him to forsake his integrity; and it tells us that he entered into the heart of Judas to engage him to betray our Saviour, and of Ananias and Sapphira, to incite them to lie to the Holy Ghost; to those who encourage in their hearts sensual ideas, he may administer occasions of carrying their favourite passions into action; the covetous he may mislead with the opportunity of gain, the ambitious with the prospect of honours and of power; he may be permitted to facilitate and forward their access to the darling object of their affection, that they may more easily destroy themselves in making the fatal acquisition. Or, if we should not allow that he is able to take so active a part in the external affairs of men in general, his influence on their internal feelings cannot, I think,

think, be doubted; perhaps he has it in his power, if not originally to put in motion our evil passions, at least to administer fuel to them, when we have willingly permitted them to assail us; perhaps he is able to indispose us, to render us slothful and inactive towards any exertions of virtue and benevolence, or perhaps he has a certain influence on our reason, can make it see objects in false colours, and thus render it inadequate to the office of directing our conduct with that safety for which it was bestowed on us by God. I should suppose that by each of these ways our subtle and powerful enemy ensnares and destroys us; but of these, the last is the most dangerous, and consequently that against which we should be most on our guard. It is probable that the devil is at the bottom of those false ideas which many men entertain of the attributes of God; that, when we are about to fall into any crime,

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from which perhaps a thorough conviction of the presence and observation of the Almighty, and of his strict justice, would restrain us, the adversary of our souls instills into us doubts and hesitations, makes us parley and deliberate, represents to us the infinite greatness of God, and that, removed as he is so far above us, and wrapt up in his transcendent majesty, it is not likely he should attend to the concerns of so insignificant a being as man; or, if this be too stale an argument, he causes us to reason on his goodness and mercy, and tries to persuade us that he will not be so extreme to mark what is done amiss, as the scriptures describe him. If by reasoning of this kind, he be able to argue a sinner out of his fear of divine punishment, he has other fallacies ready to bring forward to diminish his dread of the punishments of men; in the first place, if the nature of the crime will at all bear it, he flatters

flatters the hesitating sinner with the hope SERM.
or the certainty of escaping detection; but XVI.
if this be impossible, he persuades him
that his being discovered will be attended
with no ill consequences — that, though
known to be a culprit, he shall yet, by
some circumstance, escape the vengeance
of the law. If the crime be not of so
deep a die, or one which does not so ma-
terially affect the peace of society—if it be
one from the commission of which the
credit and character chiefly are endangered,
our enemy points out the number of those
who have been guilty, with impunity—bids
us mark how they are still caressed and
respected by their fellow creatures, and
insinuates that perhaps some of them have
found the means of alluring this kindness
by their very crimes.

Fraud and rapine are frequently the
steps to wealth; and wealth, no matter
how obtained, rarely fails to procure to its
possessor deference and respect; but, let

SERM. it be remembered, that this is only in appearance: in appearance, I must admit that it does too often happen, but never in reality; — those who bow lowest to the grandeur of the prosperous villain, cannot really honour him; but, though mean enough to pay outward homage to his possessions, they, in their hearts (sordid wretches as they are) despise and detest the man.

I will dismiss this subject, by observing, that the instances of successful wickedness are single, while in the common and usual course of worldly affairs it meets with its deserved punishment; here and there, a particular villain may be pointed out, who has escaped the punishment of the laws and the open contempt and detestation of his fellows, while there are numbers who are yearly falling sacrifices to public justice, and multitudes of less atrocious criminals, who are overwhelmed with justly merited infamy.

All

All the other arguments which the devil may bring forward to persuade us, when he is tempting us to sin, of the impunity of it with respect to our persons, fortunes, and characters, might be easily refuted, if we reasoned with unbiassed minds; but, while our passions are engaged on his side, he seldom fails to subdue us.

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Let us then, whenever we find ourselves tempted to do what our conscience suggests to be wrong, be aware that we are not then in a proper state to argue on the innocence or guilt of it—let us stay till a cooler moment—and, even then, let us recollect how much the devil is interested to deceive us;—let us be upon our guard against his wiles;—and let us, in addition, call in to our aid the fear of God—and so we shall be fully able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one.

All the other arguments which the devil may bring forward to persuade us, when he is tempting us to sin, of the impurity of it with respect to our persons, fortunes, and character, might be easily refuted if we reason with unbiassed minds: but while our passions are engaged on his side he seldom fails to subdue us by the force of his lies, whenever we find ourselves tempted to do what our conscience suggests to be wrong, be aware that we are not then in a proper state to argue on the innocence or guilt of it—let us stay till a cooler moment—and even then let us not collect how much the devil is interested to deceive us—let us be upon our guard against his wiles—and let us in addition call in to our aid the fear of God—and so we shall be fully able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one.

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SERMON XVII.

DELAY OF PUNISHMENT THE CAUSE OF SIN.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

*Because sentence against an evil work is not
executed speedily, therefore the heart of the
sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

WHEN the punishments which are de- SERM.
nounced against impiety and vice are so XVII.
alarmingly dreadful, it seems hard to con-
ceive that any men should be found so in-
attentive to their own interest, as to ven-
ture to provoke them. The text informs
us whence this arises; it tells us that
this temerity and madness is owing to the

R 4 delay

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delay of justice, it is because the exaction of the penalty does not immediately follow the commission of the crime, but that some uncertain space intervenes. — “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed *speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

It is the purpose of this discourse to set before you some of the conclusions that men draw from this delay of punishment, by which they encourage and harden themselves in their sins, and to shew the falsity of such conclusions—their folly and ingratitude.

And first,—there are said to be some, who, on seeing the sinner uninterrupted in his wickedness for a long time, conclude that there is no God, or, if there be one, that he takes no notice of what is doing upon earth; but as I am addressing a Christian congregation, I need not set myself to answer

answer this argument. You all allow that there is a God, and that he is an exact ob-
server of human affairs.

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A second argument, by which some, who may have a small sense of religion in them, deceive themselves, is this; they think that, because sin goes unpunished for the present, it is not therefore so great an evil, nor so entirely offensive and provoking to God, as it is represented. But how absurd and ungrateful is this! Because God does not take immediate vengeance on us, when we disobey his commands, we therefore venture to set them at nought, and persuade ourselves that this disobedience is a matter of no importance. All kinds of sin, we allow, are strictly forbidden in our Bible, and heavy penalties denounced against them; but because these penalties do not instantly follow, we therefore foolishly doubt whether they will be exacted at all; because we experience the greatness of God's mercy
in

SERM. in affording us time for repentance, we
XVII. therefore presumptuously conclude against
his justice and veracity. He hath solemnly sworn that the sinner who continues impenitent, and dies in his sins, shall not enter into his rest; and do we impiously imagine, because the execution of this tremendous threat is deferred for a short time, that the oath of the God of truth shall fail?—Can an impunity of thirty or forty years lead us to such an absurd conclusion as this?—of thirty or forty years which are but as a grain of sand in comparison with the sea shore, but as a single moment in respect to eternity!—But still farther,—during this present life we are upon our trial, and till that is ended, it would scarce seem equitable that sentence should be passed; nor was it ever intended by God to distribute exact justice in this world.

You remember the parable of the tares mixed with the wheat; the servants of the house-

householder are in haste to root out and destroy them; but he interposes and prevents it:—“Let them (says he) both grow

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“together until the harvest, and in the
“time of harvest I will say to the reapers;
“Gather ye together, first the tares, and
“bind them into bundles to burn them;
“but gather the wheat into my barn.”

Our Saviour, at the request of his disciples, explained to them this parable; he told them that the field was the world,—the wheat, the children of the kingdom, i. e. good people; the tares, the children of the wicked one, i. e. bad people: that this wicked one, who sowed them, was the devil; that the harvest was the end of the world, and the reapers the angels:—“As
“therefore, (added he) the tares are gathered together and burned in the fire,
“so shall it be in the end of the world.—
“The son of man shall send forth his
“angels, and they shall gather out of his
“king-

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“In the kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

You see our Saviour himself tells us, that judgment will not take place against sinners till the end of the world; we have therefore no reason to be surprized at their present impunity, nor can we at all argue from it, that sin is no evil, or that it is not displeasing to God, or that he will not take severe vengeance on those who commit it. The truth is, we have much ground to apprehend, that the longer the punishment of the wicked is delayed, the more heavy and dreadful it will be, when it does fall on them: God spares them for the present; he permits them to fill up the measure of their sins, but in the mean time he fills up the vials of his wrath; he shows forth his
mercy

mercy in this world, but in the next he will shew forth his justice; now he restrains his anger, and permits the unrighteous to triumph in their safety; but the time will come when he will make amends for this apparent indifference—when he will vindicate his insulted majesty in the sight of men and angels.—Go on then thou, who presumest on the long-suffering of God, yield to every evil temptation, follow the bent of every corrupt passion, walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that in the mean time thou art treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Or take the matter in another light, and suppose (what is also true) that the Almighty means by this delay of sentence, to give the sinner time and encouragement to repent of his wickedness, and reform his life; what an ungrateful turn is it to give
to

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to this goodness, to conclude from it, that the disobedience of God's commands is a matter of no consequence, and that it is not greatly offensive to him, but that, because he graciously suspends, he will therefore never inflict punishment.

Far different is the reasoning which a generous mind would suggest; "O God (it would prompt us to say) O gracious God, who desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; blessed be thy holy name, that thou hast afforded us time for recollection and repentance: what must have been our condition if thou hadst cut us off in our sins! Prevent us from abusing thy patience, and enable us to take advantage of thy long-suffering; through thy mercy the gate of life is still open to us, Oh! grant us grace to enter, ere it close against us, and exclude us for ever!"

But

But after all, God, even in this world, has not left us without proofs of the evil nature of sin, and of his perfect hatred of it; witness the disturbed reflections and alarming anticipations of the wicked, that hell, which is already begun in the guilty bosom,—a guilty conscience;—witness that flood of waters which overwhelmed the whole earth, and destroyed all flesh for their corruption and violence;—witness the destruction of those iniquitous cities Sodom and Gomorrah, by that terrible shower of fire and brimstone;—witness the instantaneous death of Ananias and Sapphira for their falsehood and hypocrisy;—witness these and a multitude of other instances, which history has handed down to us, of the present punishment of iniquity, both in particular persons, and also of whole nations:—so that God has not left us even here without sufficient warning of the evil of sin, and of its dangerous and destructive tendency.

A third

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A third set of persons, who suffer themselves to be betrayed into ruin by this delay of sentence, are those who, acknowledging the heinous nature of sin, and the danger to which it exposes them, do yet continue in their wickedness, because they think that they shall have abundance of time, before they die, for repentance. But this is so great a hazard in all respects, that there is no venturing upon it. In the first place, they cannot be certain that time will be allowed them; they may be cut off in a moment, and in the grave there is nothing to be done in religion,—as the tree falls, so it lies; or if that portion of life, with which they flatter themselves, should be granted, the probability is that they will be more unwilling to forsake their sins at some future time, than they are at present. What was begun by passion may be confirmed by habit, and from having his mercy so long despised, God may be tempted entirely

tirely to withdraw from them his holy spirit, without which they will be altogether unequal to any good work. It is owing to God that they are alive at this moment; let them then take those measures which alone can determine whether, with respect to them, his long-suffering be a mercy: let them this instant make their peace with him, lest his patience be wearied out, and no farther opportunity be allowed them.

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I shall mention only one more unhappy consequence which sinners draw from this delay of punishment, and that is, that though certain, it is yet distant, and so distant, that they cannot think of it with any great degree of concern. This is a strange, and yet, I fear, no very uncommon consolation.

If a future judgment must come, if we must one day give an account of all our thoughts, words, and actions, and (according as we have done well or ill) be re-

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warded with everlasting happiness, or doomed to everlasting misery — it diminishes very little the weight of this tremendous truth — that this judgment and these punishments will not take place till some remote period: — how great they will be, and how long they will last, is the only important consideration; — and when we hear that they will be in degree above our most alarming conceptions, and that to their duration there will be no end, we ought surely to count it nothing, even if a long time were *certainly* to elapse before they began.

But we may be mistaken, even in this point; judgment may be nearer to us than we imagine; we may be called to render up our accounts much sooner than we expect: and when we vainly flatter ourselves with many more years of ease and luxury, when every thing appears to smile upon us, the decree may then be

II sealed,

sealed, and the commandment come forth to summon us to our last audit. Death is constantly hanging over us — and, immediately on death, follows judgment! — for whether we are instantly brought to trial, at our departure from this world, or whether we lay insensible in the grave till the consummation of all things, makes no difference — the intervening time will appear but as a single moment. There is indeed a third opinion, which is — that the soul will exist and retain all its faculties, apart from the body, from the decease of the man till the end of the world; — but, if it be so, how dreadful must be the reflections and terrors with which the soul of the sinner will be oppressed, who foresees its own inevitable doom, and yet knows it to be impossible to do any thing to avert it! So that whether sentence on each particular person follows instantly on his death, or whether we lie insensible

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in the grave till the general judgment, or whether the soul live separate from the body, seems matter of little importance; in the two former cases, it appears to me to be just the same; and, in the latter, I see not that it can afford any just grounds of consolation to the wicked.

From what has been said, I trust that the folly and ingratitude of being bold in our sins, because the punishment of them is not inflicted immediately, will be sufficiently evident: — would to God that we may all, not only at this present moment, perceive it, but that it may sink deep into our hearts, and influence our future conduct!

Let us ever remember how insignificant this life is, in comparison with eternity! pass but a few short years, and all those, who now crowd the scene, will be mouldering in their graves! — even the very memory of them (save of some distinguished few)

few) shall be no more! — but their works SERM.
XVII.
will follow even the *most obscure*; —
their merits will one day be drawn from
their dread abode, and proclaimed and re-
compensed in the face of the universe!
then will God's perfect hatred of sin, and
his veracity and justice, be conspicuous!
then will the sinner, who distrusted the
execution of his threats, or made light of
them because of their distance, be terribly
convinced of his error; while the righteous
man, who, by patient continuance in well
doing, shewed his faith in his promises,
shall receive rewards infinitely surpassing
his most sanguine hopes and conceptions.

and shall be no more. — But their works shall
 be as the work of the earth, which shall be
 their reward, with one day be given them
 their due wages, and according to the
 commandment to the face of the righteous;
 then will God's perfect hatred of sin manifest
 his veracity and justice be demonstrated;
 then will the angels and spirits of the
 righteous of his blood be made right of
 their account of their sinners be terribly
 convicted of his error, while the righteous
 shall then by perfect confidence in well
 doing be preserved this world in his presence
 shall receive reward infinitely surpassing
 all that can be conceived or expressed in
 words. — And thus shall the righteous
 be made perfect in the love of God and
 his brethren, and shall be made partakers
 of the inheritance of the saints in light.
 — And thus shall the righteous be made
 perfect in the love of God and his brethren,
 and shall be made partakers of the inheritance
 of the saints in light. — And thus shall
 the righteous be made perfect in the love
 of God and his brethren, and shall be made
 partakers of the inheritance of the saints
 in light. — And thus shall the righteous
 be made perfect in the love of God and
 his brethren, and shall be made partakers
 of the inheritance of the saints in light.

ment without being convinced of it; yet has it happened from various causes that there is no law of our religion which is more openly or more frequently violated.

SERMON XVIII.

AGAINST MALICE AND RESENTMENT.

ROMANS xii. FORMER PART OF V. 17.

Recompense to no man evil for evil.

THERE is no virtue which is more frequently and strongly inculcated in the gospel, than the forgiveness of those who have injured us. Good will towards his enemies is an indispensable requisite in the formation of the character of a Christian; it is the condition on which alone his own faults can be pardoned, and his imperfect obedience meet with acceptance. The truth of this assertion is so glaring, that it is scarce

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possible to read a page of the New Testament, without being convinced of it; yet has it happened from various causes that there is no law of our religion, which is more openly or more frequently violated. The greatness of the provocation—the want of duty, or proper respect, in the person who has offended us—his ingratitude—the dread lest he should triumph in our forbearance, and be encouraged to new insults—the apprehension of the scorn and contempt of the world, are all alledged as excuses for resentment and retaliation: passion and pride are, in this instance, combined against virtue: the one is raised instantly, and prompts us to inflict pain on the person from whom we have received it; the other operates more leisurely, but, unhappily, with greater effect; it forbids us to forgive, though we are no longer enraged; it commands us to revenge, though we wish for reconciliation.

Among

Among the many errors in the opinions of mankind, there is none which is productive of more unhappiness, and perhaps of more guilt, than that which has annexed the idea of meanness and cowardice to a quiet submission to an injury; the party offended scarce, perhaps, on some occasions, feels the offence, on others he would be willing to overlook it, but the eye of the world is upon him, he fancies that he is expected to exert himself, and is revengeful from regard to his reputation.

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From the weakness of human nature, from the various competitions of men, from all desiring to obtain that which can only be the property of a few, it must necessarily happen, that offences will often be given, injuries frequently be done; no command therefore could be more worthy of him, at whose birth peace was proclaimed upon earth, than to forgive: forgiveness puts a sudden stop to the most material conse-

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consequences of an injury, it prevents it from extending beyond its natural effects, it composes the mind of him who is aggrieved, and probably induces the repentance of the aggressor. Whereas, if the person offended were at liberty to avenge the offence, if he were free to return what he had suffered, himself the judge, it is scarcely possible that he should so measure his revenge, as not to exceed the pain he had received; his adversary, at least, will never allow the justice of his punishment; the same malicious or overbearing temper, which excited the first injury, will put him on justifying it; he, in his turn, will have recourse to retaliation, and a continued series of hostilities will be the consequence. Into what a state then would society be reduced! at home the gnawings of malice, the gloom of hatred, and sullen meditations on revenge; abroad, secret calumnies, open reproaches, violence, and, not unfrequently, bloodshed.

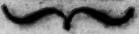
Every

Every consideration of justice and equity SERM.
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is on the side of forgiveness: there is no man but who must be conscious of his own frailty, and of the need in which himself stands of remission of offences: sometimes, perhaps, he has been injurious to his fellow-creature, and certainly often rebellious against his Creator; let him then exert an indulgence, which he expects—let him forgive, as he hopes to be forgiven. Why should he look, in his own case, for the allowance which he is not willing to grant in the case of others? How dare he presume that his own frailties will be passed by, while himself is extreme to mark what is done amiss? It is in vain that he alleges greatness of provocation, or height of ingratitude; he is not the proper judge; whilst he is under the dominion of his resentment, he ought to suspect that it is not probable he should be just; he may feel more, perhaps, of the injury

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injury than was intended, his self-love may represent it to him in aggravated colours; what was possibly merely the effect of mistake or negligence, he may attribute to design; he is encompassed indeed on every side with error, which he can only hope to escape by subduing his resentment.

But, grant that you have been indeed provokingly treated and heinously wronged, are you to give up the government of your temper, and to yield yourself a prey to the torments of rage, because your enemy has been unjust? are you to endanger your eternal salvation, because your friend has been ungrateful? Alas! this is to revenge the faults of others on yourself; it is to swell the bulk, and increase the acrimony, of their offences; it is to confer on them a fatal importance, which they could receive from none but yourself. The utmost that the malice of man can do affects only the body—extends
not

not beyond this world; it is ourselves alone SERM.
XVIII.
that can cast both body and soul into hell. 

You remember the treatment of the servant in the parable, who, after having received from his lord a generous forgiveness of a large debt, went and used the utmost severity against one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a small debt.—

“ O thou wicked servant (said his lord)

“ I forgave thee that debt because thou

“ desiredst me: shouldest not thou also

“ have had compassion on thy fellow-

“ servant, even as I had pity on thee?

“ And the lord was wroth, and delivered

“ him to the tormentors, till he should

“ pay all that was due unto him.” Pre-

cisely in the same case stands the unmer-

ciful, unforgiving man. If God were ex-

treme to mark what is done amiss, which

of us should live another day, to be of-

fended or to offend? He created us, he pre-

serves us, and he redeemed us; yet we are

constantly

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constantly injuring—perpetually provoking him. Of what ingratitude towards us can our earthly brother be guilty, in comparison of what we are guilty towards our heavenly Father!

Let us beware, then, lest by our own rigours we create a precedent against ourselves. “With what judgment we judge, we shall be judged; with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again.” When we are inclined to be unforgiving, let us remember the menace to which we expose ourselves: after our Saviour had related to his disciples the severity which was exercised against the unmerciful servant, he immediately added—“So likewise shall your heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

If example have any sway with us, all that there is of great or good in the uni-

verse

verse is on the side of mercy and forgiveness. Though his majesty be so daringly violated, though his commands be so rebelliously disobeyed, though we are continually provoking him by our insults and iniquities, yet is the Great Governor of heaven and earth slow to anger, and eager to forgive; time, warning, assistance to repent and regain his favour, are all amply bestowed on ungrateful man. "God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." Hostile as he is to every species of iniquity, and boundless as is his power to punish it, his most favourite title is—the Father of Mercies. If we look to the conduct of the Son of God, the virtue of forgiveness is also eminently conspicuous; his whole life indeed was one continued instance of it—in return for reproaches he bestowed instruction, in return for personal insults he put up petitions

SERM. tions for the insulter, in return for death
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he gave redemption: — “When he was
“reviled, he reviled not again; when he
“suffered, he threatened not.” Nor did
his amiable disposition forsake him when
in his dying agonies — his last prayer was
for his murderers — “Father, forgive them,
“for they know not what they do.” The
same virtue has also in general made a
part of the character of those illustrious
persons, whom history hath handed down
to us as most worthy of her encomiums;
clemency and reconcileableness have added
a lustre to all their other virtues.

Since there are so many motives to for-
giveness, — since our quiet in this world,
and our happiness in the next, depend
upon it, — since it is recommended to us
by the example of holy and illustrious
men, of our Saviour Christ, and of God
himself, — it seems extraordinary that any
should be found, who will give a place in
their

their breasts to those bad passions, resentment and revenge: the truth is, that how-
ever inclined to forgive, they pusillani-
mously suffer themselves to be deterred
from it from a fear of being despised by
the world, from a dread of sinking in the
opinion of their fellow mortals, of beings,
whose superiority they are under no obli-
gation to acknowledge, and who, when
courted with the utmost attention, can
confer no valuable or lasting reward; of
beings, who ignorantly judge what they
have never examined, or partially deter-
mine what they do not understand. He
that can descend to sue for the favour of
such frail creatures at the price of his in-
nocence, who can suffer their praises to
induce him to disobey the great Governor
of the world, has little reason to be proud
of the greatness of his mind, and must
surely, when he awakens to reflection,

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become

SERM. become despicable in his own eyes, and
 XVIII. shrink with shame at the remembrance of
 his folly and cowardice.

The utmost perfection, to which humanity can arrive, is a constant and determinate pursuit of virtue, without any regard to present danger or advantage. Let us not then turn to the right hand or to the left, either swayed by the applauses, or terrified by the censures of the world; but let us go straight on in that path, which the author of our religion has marked out, and which our own conscience will tell us leads to life and happiness: let no false opinion of dignity or honour deter us from mercy and forgiveness, and invite us to resentment. Of him who hopes to be forgiven, it is indispensably necessary that he forgive; no motive then ought to have the least weight when put in competition with this. On this virtue of forgiveness
 eternity

eternity is suspended, and to him who re-
fuses to practise it, the throne of mercy
is inaccessible, and the Saviour of the
world has been born in vain.

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SERMON XIX.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. PART OF V. 10.

I laboured more abundantly than they all.

THIS day is appointed by our church to be kept sacred in memory of the conversion of St. Paul. Whether we consider the extraordinary circumstances which produced this conversion, or whether we look to the advantage which the Gentile world, and we, among others, have received from it,—in either view, both reason and gratitude demand that it should be had in everlasting remembrance.

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I propose in this discourse to enter concisely into the history and character of this illustrious apostle, and to shew the argument which his conversion affords in favour of the truth of Christianity, and, lastly, to lay down some rules for your practice, which the facts described may suggest.

By the conversion of St. Paul is meant, his quitting the Jewish, and embracing the Christian religion. St. Paul was born at Tarsus, of Jewish parents; their circumstances were probably opulent, though they brought up their son to the trade of tent-making; for it was usual with the Jews, whatever fortune they were able to give their children, to have them instructed in some trade, both to keep them from idleness, and that they might have some resource, if their circumstances should ever require it.

Having received the rudiments of his
education

education at his native place, he was sent, SERM.
XIX.
at a certain time, to complete it at Jerusa-
lem, and was placed under the care of Gamaliel, the most eminent Jewish teacher of his time. Here St. Paul made a great proficiency, "and became expert in all the customs and questions which are among the Jews." The sect of which he made choice was that of the Pharisees, the most strict of all others, and, being of a warm temper, he became exceedingly zealous for the Jewish religion.

This was not long after the death of Christ, but yet his followers had greatly increased in numbers; and as they did not scruple to assert, that the religion which they taught was to be erected on the ruins of Judaism, they gave very serious alarms to the Jews. Among others, St. Paul, believing the whole to be an imposture, and verily thinking (as he says) that he ought to do many things contrary to the name

SERM. of Jesus of Nazareth, became extremely
XIX. irritated against the Christians, he gave his
voice against them, punished them oft
in every synagogue, and compelled them
to blaspheme; and when the first martyr,
Stephen, was executed, St Paul was con-
senting to his death, and stood by and took
care of the clothes of those who stoned
him.

It was soon after this, that, not contented
with what he had done at Jerusalem, he
went to the chief priest, and solicited from
him letters to the synagogues of Damas-
cus, which might authorize him to take
and imprison all those whom he found
adhering to the name of Christ. But as
he was in the midst of his journey, full of
his unjust purpose, about noon, a light
from heaven, above the brightness of the
sun, shone round about him, and those
who were with him; and when they were
all fallen to the earth, St. Paul heard a
voice

voice speaking to him in the Hebrew SERM.
tongue, and saying — “Saul, Saul, why KIX.
“persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee
“to kick against the pricks;” and he said,
“Who art thou, Lord?” And the voice
answered — “I am Jesus, whom thou per-
“secutest. But rise, and stand upon thy
“feet: for I have appeared unto thee for
“this purpose, to make thee a minister
“and a witness, both of these things which
“thou hast seen, and of those in the which
“I will appear unto thee; delivering thee
“from the people and from the Gentiles,
“unto whom I now send thee; to open
“their eyes, and to turn them from dark-
“ness to light, and from the power of
“Satan unto God, that they may receive
“forgiveness of sins, and inheritance
“among them which are sanctified by
“by faith, that is in me.” And when
Paul arose, he was blind, and those who
were with him took him by the hand,
and

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and brought him to Damascus; and he continued blind for three days, and neither did eat nor drink. But after three days were past, he was visited, by the command of God, by a devout Christian called Ananias, and at his word received his sight. Immediately from that time he became obedient to the heavenly vision, and was as remarkably active and zealous in supporting and propagating Christianity, as he had formerly been in opposing and persecuting it. His whole life was spent in labours and travels for this divine purpose; difficulties, dangers, sufferings of every kind, he voluntarily and joyfully encountered for this end; and he finally laid down his life in the same glorious cause.

Such are the outlines of the history of this illustrious apostle; it forms one among many invincible proofs of the truth of our religion. Here is a man strongly
 attached

attached to a particular cause, with all the SERM.
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prejudices of birth and education in its
favour; in the same proportion also he
is adverse to another cause, which he
looks on as entirely opposite to his own;
he has openly shewn both his friendship
and his enmity, nay, he has gone so far
as to solicit a public commission, by which
he might be able more effectually to gra-
tify them. Yet in the midst of all his
zeal, we behold him suddenly changing his
sentiments, and labouring and preaching in
favour of that very religion, which he had
set out, determined to overthrow.

Now to what can we attribute this, but
to the strongest conviction of his former
mistaken notions, and of the justice of
those which he had now adopted. He
could possibly have no other motive for
doing what he did, but the strongest per-
suasion that it was right. He could not
hope either to gain riches or honour by
this

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this change; on the contrary, he was certain to forfeit both; the party which he left were in the possession of all worldly goods, the party he embraced were entirely destitute;—from the former he could expect nothing but abuse, enmity, and persecution (which we find he constantly experienced)—from the latter, who were poor and weak, and whose numbers were comparatively very small, he could neither look for support nor protection. He could not change his religion with a view of becoming great and powerful in that party to whom he betook himself; for we do not find him ever asserting any superiority over them, or pretending to any thing more than independence; on the contrary, he constantly acknowledges how blameable he had formerly been in afflicting the Christians, and names himself, on that account, less than the least of the apostles; besides, eminence in this new sect

sect was certainly not an object of ambition to a reasonable man, who was not thoroughly convinced of the truth of their opinions; for, in so poor and despised a society, it could confer no worldly advantages, but only exposed those who might attain it, to more severe and inevitable persecution.

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It is clear then, that no other adequate motive can be assigned for St. Paul's conversion, but his being persuaded of its justice; — the conclusion therefore is, that he firmly believed the Christian religion, which he embraced, to be sent from God. But perhaps an enemy to our faith might say — that St. Paul was deceived, that the whole was a trick put upon him, and contrived by the Christians to gain over to their party so active an adversary; — but I will be bold to say that the circumstances of the case were such as to render this absolutely impossible. A company of men

and is not tra-

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travelling along the high road at noon-day, are all of a sudden struck to the ground by a great light, exceeding the brightness of the sun—they all see the light and hear a voice—but only one of them, St. Paul, distinctly understands what is said; upon their arising from the ground, St. Paul is found to be totally blind, and those who are with him are obliged to take him by the hand and lead him to the city, whither they are going; he continues blind for three days, till his sight is wonderfully restored at the word of a devout person, of whose coming and doing him this benevolent office he is before apprized in a vision; he is likewise informed, by the same person, that he is a chosen instrument to preach the religion of Christ, throughout the world. Now in all this, there could possibly be no deception;—therefore St. Paul became a Christian on just and sure grounds—and the Christian religion is true.

The

The lessons for our own practice, which SERM.
XIX. might be drawn from the character and history of St. Paul, are various; I shall content myself with pointing out, on the present occasion, one which the words of the text particularly suggest.—“I laboured more abundantly than they all.” The natural warmth of St. Paul’s temper might possibly have its part in promoting this extraordinary diligence; but it was, doubtless, much increased by the remembrance of the hostilities which he had formerly exercised against the Christian cause. In like manner it behoves every one, who, either from error or depravity, has been guilty of sins, when he once turns away from his wickedness, to exert himself in the most strenuous manner in attaining the greatest heights of virtue.

This is peculiarly necessary in the penitent, whether he considers the propriety of making atonement for past miscarriages,

SERM. riages, or whether he would guard against
 XIX. the danger of a relapse, to which a mediocrity of zeal would expose him. It is clearly requisite, according to every rule of justice, that they who have affronted God, by their impieties, in the former part of their lives, should make him all the amends in their power by excess of adoration and obedience in the latter; and that they who have injured mankind by their vices, or debauched them by their ill example, when young, should exert every effort to benefit them by their virtues, and reform them by the most scrupulous and unremitting righteousness, when old.

This is so striking a truth, that we generally find those who truly repent, shewing their conviction of it by their actions. They are usually more zealous for the honour of God, more strict in their observation of the duties of religion and morality, more eager and active for the con-

version

version and good of men, than their fellows; they do not content themselves with the middle regions of virtue, but are ever aspiring to the most sublime. He who is sensible that in the former part of his life he has greatly offended, and who does not find in himself these dispositions, has much reason to doubt his own sincerity; and thus have I suggested a criterion by which he may try it.

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A second reason why the penitent should labour more abundantly, is, the danger of a relapse, to which, indifference or mediocrity of virtue would expose him. If he does not recede, as far as possible, from the confines of those sins, of which he has formerly been guilty—if he be not careful to avoid those situations, which he has experienced to lead to them—and to forsake those companions, in whose society he has so frequently transgressed—it is scarcely possible that he should preserve his in-

SERM. tegrity;—his resolutions, however firm he
XIX. may think them, will be transient as the morning cloud and the early dew, which so soon passeth away. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall!—this caution is very necessary to be observed, even by those who have constantly gone on in an undeviating course of virtue; but it more peculiarly applies to him who is just emerging from the gulphs of vice; for even the very habit of sinning, independent of the depravity of heart which wickedness creates, will be continually soliciting his return. Let every one then, who is fully convinced of his former miscarriages, and truly sorry for them, constantly retain the example of St. Paul in his eye; and as that great apostle, who had erroneously offended, thought himself obliged to use such extraordinary efforts in favour of the religion of Jesus,—much more let him,
who

who has so frequently sinned knowingly **SERM.**
and presumptuously, exert every faculty **XIX.**
of his soul, and employ every hour of his
life, to exhibit himself a pattern of every
Christian grace and every human virtue.

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SERMON XX.

THE TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL ADVANTAGES
OF GODLINESS.

I TIMOTHY iv. 8.

Godliness is profitable unto all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

It is very unaccountable how it ever came to be imagined that religion was an unprofitable and ill-natured thing, and that if a man was determined earnestly to follow it, he must give up all the pleasures of this world, and quit every hope of advancing himself in it. This persuasion, I say, is very unaccountable,—since the contrary is evidently the case; the religious man is of all others by far the most likely to obtain

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SERM. tain and to relish worldly happiness, and
 XX.  to arrive at that degree of worldly honour and wealth which his birth and education will admit.

Two things are affirmed in the text,—one, that godliness has the promise of the life to come, i. e. that religion will procure for its followers everlasting joys in heaven; another, that it has the promise of this life, that it will obtain for them an abundant share of earthly good things.

As to the truth of the first, there is no dispute; almost all are agreed, that if a man is devout towards God, fearing, loving, and serving him as he ought, and if he behaves to his fellow-creatures as the scripture, God's word, enjoins (acting by them as he would expect they should act by him) and if he be temperate, sober, and chaste in his own personal behaviour, almost all are agreed, that if he conducts himself thus, when this life shall be ended, he will be rewarded in a state which is to follow.

How,

How, indeed, is it possible that a rea- SERM.
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sonable being should believe otherwise?

That we did not come into the world without a maker, is very evident; that that maker is infinitely good, wise, and powerful, may easily be proved; whence it will follow, as he is good, that he delights in goodness,—as he is wise, that he knows fully when it is practised and when neglected,—and as he is powerful, that he is able to confer rewards on the obedient, and inflict punishment on the rebellious.

In the scriptures also, are contained, to the same effect, the words of this our Maker; in them, by means of holy and good men, and by his beloved Son, he speaks to us, and tells us of the happiness which he has prepared for the righteous, and the misery which is laid up for the wicked. God, who cannot lie, tells us this; let us, therefore, be sure that it will happen according to his word. These pro-

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misers and threats are addressed, without exception, to all men, and, whether we choose it or not, we are all equally concerned in them; we can neither obtain the former, nor escape the latter, if we refuse to act as God has commanded. It is necessary, perhaps, to mention this, because the opinion is not very unusual, that religion was only meant for particular sets of men; for the clergy for instance, for the rich, for the old, for the sickly, in short, for any but ourselves. The rich are frequently for shifting it off to the poor, and the poor again to the rich; the healthy would leave it to the sick, and the sick to the healthy; and some of all descriptions would gladly persuade themselves, that it was intended for others, but not for them. But yet no exception is found in the scriptures in favour of any; all are commanded to be devout towards God, and just and benevolent towards men.

It

It is in vain, then, that we plead any particular difficulties, arising from our particular situation, rank, age, or profession, in excuse for disobeying this command; such pleas will not be admitted; there is certainly no impossibility, be our condition what it may, of serving God, and being just and kind to our fellow-creatures: and though some may practise these duties in a greater extent than others, all may do it in *some* degree; allowance will be made for what is impracticable, but not for what is only difficult; if we strive with difficulties, they will certainly yield to us; but if, from indolence and the desire of indulging our vicious passions, we ingloriously yield to them, and allege them as excuses for our depravity, let us not flatter ourselves with hopes that we shall either obtain the rewards which God has promised, or escape the condemnation which he has threatened. Godliness, by which is meant not only devotion

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to all his commands, has the promise of the life to come; and though we may imagine that we have ever so much to say for ourselves, in palliation of our irreligion and disobedience, on no other terms but religion and obedience can we go to heaven. But it is asserted in the text, that godliness has likewise the promise of this present life; that is, that men shall be happy and successful on earth, if they are pious to God and benevolent to men; the truth of which I now proceed to prove to you.

That the religious man is the most likely to be happy inwardly, let his outward condition be what it may, admits, I think, of no doubt; for he is certain that if he perseveres in his goodness, though he may endure many calamities here, he will soon arrive at a period when he shall be removed from them, and be recompensed with happiness which shall never end. This consideration,

sideration, together with the certainty that he is even now in the favour, and under the protection of an all-powerful Being, cannot fail to support him under all his earthly afflictions, and to disarm them of their chief sting:—whereas the wicked man, in adversity, has no one comfort to which he can apply — all is dark and gloomy; from God he knows he has nothing to hope in this world, and nothing to expect in the next, but wrath and punishment. Nor in the greatest outward prosperity can he entirely silence the voice of conscience; that active monitress will at all times interpose and insist on being attended to;—the uncertainty of life—the certainty of death—the tremendous day of judgment — and the dreadful torments which are denounced against the impenitent, are the subjects of her remonstrances; subjects, which from time to time appal the sinner in his most daring moments, and embitter his most favourite

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SERM. favourite enjoyments. Now the certainty
XX. of the favour of God, and the sure expectations of eternal rewards, must make the good man, in circumstances however disastrous, more happy than the most prosperous wicked person, whose pleasures are thus terribly interrupted. But, added to this, there is much ground to conclude, both from reason and experience, that the religious and benevolent person, one who is devout towards God, and considerate towards men, will, besides his inward satisfaction, obtain according to his birth and education an ample share of earthly good things.

There are many passages in scripture containing assertions and promises to this effect; which, though they are not to be understood strictly, as if the contrary never happened, yet we may depend upon it, that they are true in general. "I have
" been young, and now am old (says the
" psalmist)

“ psalmist) and yet never saw I the right-
“ eous forsaken, nor his seed begging their
“ bread. Thou, Lord, wilt bless the
“ righteous, with favour wilt thou com-
“ pass him as with a shield. Seek ye the
“ kingdom of God and his righteousness,
“ and all these things shall be added unto
“ you,” that is, all earthly good things.
And many are the texts of the like kind.
But besides these promises of God, the
virtues which the religious man is obliged
to practise have a natural tendency to raise
his fortune, and to advance him to dis-
tinction. Industry, temperance, punctua-
lity, all of them qualities strictly enjoined
by religion, are certainly the readiest
means of acquiring riches; while the op-
posite vices, idleness, extravagance, and
thoughtlessness, almost constantly lead to
poverty. The vicious man indeed some-
times, from interested motives, may be
to a certain degree industrious and tem-
perate;

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SERM. XX.  
 perate; but if his wickedness is known  
 (which sooner or later it will be) he is  
 never so much confided in, as the religious  
 man: the former; I have much reason to  
 believe, will be no longer honest to me  
 than it is his interest to be so,—while I  
 have the strongest security that the latter  
 will be faithful, even against himself. In  
 short, a man, who does not concern him-  
 self about another world, does not act ra-  
 tionally, if he denies himself any present  
 pleasure or profit, however much he may  
 injure others, provided he can escape being  
 found out, or being punished. This is very  
 well known by the world; for experience is  
 tolerably uniform, that he who disbelieves  
 or despises his God, is injurious and trea-  
 cherous towards his fellow-creature:—  
 whereas the religious man, who looks  
 forward to a day of judgment when he  
 shall be rewarded or punished everlast-  
 ingly according as he has behaved in this  
 world,

world, will never deliberately injure his fellow-creature, even though he were sure that it would never be known; because he is convinced, that however much he might acquire by it at present, in the end he would be the greatest of all losers; he is certain, that though he should gain the whole world by dishonesty, it would profit him nothing, because he must lose his own soul. Now such a person as this, is certainly one, whom the generality would choose to trust and to employ; and from the confidence of those around us, and their readiness to employ us in our several trades and professions, arises that degree of riches, which our stations in life will admit. And not only do riches usually follow the conscientious discharge of our duties towards God and man, but the esteem, the affection, the reverence of our fellow-creatures, and all those distinctions and honours which it is in their power

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power to bestow. 'Independently then of the rewards which await religion in the next world, it has likewise a tendency to procure for us, according to our spheres, a competent share of earthly good things; Godliness has not only the promise of the life to come, but of this life also; and it may be asserted, without the fear of being confuted, that whatever be our rank, profession, or trade, the practice of religion and virtue is by far the readiest road to every thing which is most valuable, both in heaven and on earth.

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And now, having brought my ministry amongst you to a conclusion, \* it cannot be improper for me to remind you all, and myself as well as you, that there is a day coming, when we shall all be called into judgement; I for the manner in which I have

\* This was the author's last discourse at Mileham.



executed my charge, and you for the degree **SERM.**  
in which you have profited by my labours; **XX.**  
let me beseech you then to join your prayers to mine, that the Almighty, of his infinite mercy, would graciously pardon our omissions, and that he may so dispose and turn our hearts, that, during that portion of life which may yet remain to us, I may exert myself with greater vigilance in turning those who shall be intrusted to me unto righteousness; and that you may make up for your deficiencies under me, by your more abundant improvement for the time to come: that so, when this transitory life is ended, we may finally meet in that blessed state, were we shall live together in peace, love, and happiness, for evermore!

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 more abundant improvement for the time  
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 is ended, we may finally meet in that bliss-  
 ful state, where we shall live together in  
 peace, love, and happiness, for evermore.

SERMON XXI.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

PROVERBS xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go,  
and when he is old he will not depart  
from it.*

I TAKE the earliest opportunity of ad-  
dressing myself to you on a subject in  
which I am much interested, and which, I  
am well convinced, will conduce very  
greatly to the good of our parish, if those  
of you, who are able, will give me your  
assistance. The subject which I mean, is  
the institution of a Sunday school. For  
some years past they have been very gene-  
ral all over the kingdom, and if they are

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carried on with the zeal, with which they have been taken up, there is every reason to hope for the most beneficial effects from them. There has not yet been time to experience, in any very considerable degree, what these effects are, because few of the children, who have been educated at these schools, are arrived at an age of maturity; but, before many years are past, there is great ground to expect, that we shall have the lower orders of people much more informed, — much more religious, — much more honest, sober, industrious, and orderly, than but too many of them are at present.

I know no greater objects of compassion than the children of those parents, who are unable to give them an education, — unable themselves to instruct them, or to pay for their being instructed by others, in their duty towards God, their neighbour, and themselves. I know no objects who  
are

are more deserving of your charity,—none on whom you can lay it out with a probability of doing so great a degree of good! It is allowed to be of the utmost importance to season very early the minds of young people with religion—with honesty—with sobriety; when this has been done, it rarely happens but, sooner or later, the good effects of it are seen; the seeds, thus early sown, will perhaps, in some, lie buried for a time, smothered by the heat and inconsiderateness of youth, but they usually break out and flourish at one period of life or other.—“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Instances, I fear, at present are too numerous of young persons who, from the ignorance, negligence, or poverty, of their parents, are utterly unacquainted with the manner in which they should serve God; entirely thoughtless of a life after this; altogether

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untaught in the obligation of doing to their neighbour, as they would wish their neighbour to do unto them; and quite uninformed how much it is their duty and interest to live temperately, soberly, and chastely. Either from the fall of Adam, or from some inherent depravity, it is but too manifest that mankind have a tendency to what is evil. As the ground, when left to itself, yields abundantly hurtful and unprofitable weeds, while care and labour are required to make it produce corn and useful vegetables; so the human heart is spontaneously fertile of follies, vices, and idleness, but seldom, if ever, brings forth the good fruits of piety, virtue, and industry, without the culture of a sober education. Now if this natural propensity towards evil be permitted to grow up unmitigated and unbroken, if it be suffered to acquire the additional strength of early and long custom, what hopes can there be that it will ever be subdued?



subdued? Experience gives us reason to SERM.  
fear that consequences the most dreadful XXI.  
will ensue. Witness the oaths and the  
curses with which the ears of the well-dis-  
posed are so frequently shocked as they  
pass along the streets! witness the drunk-  
enness and debauchery which so generally  
prevail! witness the multitude of un-  
happy abandoned females, who infest and  
dishonour every part of our kingdom, and  
seduce and corrupt our youth! witness  
the frequent attacks of desperate and un-  
principled want, both on property and life!  
witness, lastly, the number of miserable  
wretches who are yearly expiating these  
enormities, some by imprisonment, some  
by transportation, not a few by death. Of  
these and similar violations of order, de-  
cency, morality, and religion, it may be  
asserted, without apprehension of contro-  
versy, that the prime source and origin is  
the want of a sober education: the chief

S.E.R.M. actors and perpetrators of them are poor,  
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ignorant creatures, uneducated, undisciplined, uninformed, whose passions have never been tamed by habits of early restraint, and who have never been instructed in those grand motives and preservatives of virtue — justice and self-denial, which are so weightily inculcated by our religion. I do not say that persons of education are *never* to be found among the notoriously vicious; to such an assertion there doubtless exist exceptions; but they are exceptions *only*, nor do they bear any sort of proportion to the number of those whose maturity has corresponded with the regular habits of their childhood.

Early good impressions are not easily effaced; the whole of life usually takes its colour from the beginning; they who have passed the first stages well, do not afterwards turn aside into the paths of unrighteousness without many struggles and much repug-



repugnancy; the ingenuous blushes of SERM.  
shame must first be quenched, the com- XXI.  
punctious visitings of remorse must first  
be excluded, ere they can intermit or break  
off those settled habits, which the having  
been so long engaged in them has ingrafted  
into their nature, and rendered not only  
easy but even delightful.

The conclusion then is, that by tending  
your aid to the education of the poor, you  
will confer on them a kindness of unspeak-  
able importance.

But it is not on them alone you will con-  
fer this kindness, you will likewise be  
highly serviceable to your country. Every  
individual whom you assist in training to  
virtue and industry, is clearly a public be-  
nefit, since it is on the virtue and industry  
of individuals that the happiness and pros-  
perity of the state must be founded. You  
will likewise confer a considerable benefit  
on yourselves; it is not only your duty to  
assist



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XXI.  
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on yourselves; it is not only your duty to  
assist



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assist in the education of the poor, but it is also your interest, and that in a very high degree. The tranquillity and the happiness of private life depend very much upon those around us; it is in the power of the lowest of our neighbours to take very much from our comfort. To live amongst a set of people sunk in profaneness and debauchery would alone be a great diminution of the happiness of a feeling man; but, besides that, he could not but be always in danger, and frequently subject to their insults—their extortions—their frauds—their violence. Now, I know nothing which is so likely to free us from these dangers, as the assisting in the education of the children of those parents, who are themselves destitute of the means. We must teach the poor that there is a life after this, where they will be everlastingly happy, if they behave themselves soberly, justly, and religiously, while they are on earth;



earth; or where they will be everlastingly SERM.  
miserable, if they are profane, debauched, XXI.  
and dishonest; we must teach them that it  
is their interest to live quietly and honestly,  
that such a life is the most likely means  
of procuring a livelihood, and of getting  
themselves forward; but that if it were  
not so, even though they should gain the  
whole world by a contrary behaviour, the  
whole world would be worth nothing to  
them, when they must lose their own  
souls.

We must teach them these things early,  
for if, as I observed before, we suffer the  
bias of human nature towards evil to gain  
strength by habit, but small are the pros-  
pects that we shall ever be able to subdue it.

I confess that the *chief* success which  
I can expect to meet with in my ministry,  
is among the young; it is here then that  
I wish chiefly to exert myself, and it is  
here that I would prevail on you to concur  
with me. As

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As then ye would have faithful servants and dependants, industrious labourers and mechanics, quiet and inoffensive neighbours, as ye would travel with safety on the roads, or lie down to rest securely in your beds, as ye would preserve your persons and properties free from violence and rapine of every kind, and as ye would avoid the reverse of all these requisites to tranquillity and comfort, ye are bound to favour and to promote the cause of education. I call upon you then, as men of religion and morality, and by consequence interested in their advancement and diffusion; I call upon you, as ye wish well to good government, and are friends to the prosperity of your country; I call upon you, as ye would contribute to the turning of many unto righteousness, and above all, as ye value your own interest and happiness both here and hereafter, to assist to the utmost of your abilities, not only now, but at all other



other times, in the training of the children of poverty to habits of virtue, industry and religion!

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Let it not be imagined that this summons is addressed only to the most wealthy; none, who are in any degree able to assist me, are unconcerned in it. Remember the widow's two mites, and the praises which her generosity won of our Saviour. Ye read, that from him only to whom much is given, much will be required; but can ye suppose, that from him to whom little is given, there will be required nothing? Far from it! Expectations are formed of us in proportion to our respective abilities; and he may obtain God's favour in as high a degree, who gives a little out of his want, as he who gives much out of his abundance; but let it be remembered that he will be equally exposed to God's anger, if he refuses what his circumstances will admit. I hope that none  
of



SERM. of you will be prevented from encouraging  
XXI. the institution, for which I am pleading,  
from an idea, that it will be of disservice,  
rather than of advantage, to the community.  
This idea, I am told, has been entertained  
by some, though I can scarcely think it  
more than a pretext to save their money.  
Their argument, such as it is, is this;  
that instruction will make the poor discontented  
with their situations; they will think  
themselves qualified for higher things, and  
will either work unwillingly, or will altogether  
forsake the laborious employments for which they  
were designed. What! is it possible that the little  
learning it falls within our plan to give, can be  
attended with this effect? We only propose to  
teach our scholars to read and to spell, and to  
instruct them in the rudiments of the Christian  
religion, by which they may be enabled hereafter  
to peruse any good books which they may procure,  
and, when they come  
to

to church, to understand the prayers and sermon. SERM.  
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Will knowledge so limited as this make a man imagine that he is fit for the senate, the pulpit, the bar, or the counting-house? I should rather suppose, that instead of making those who acquire it dissatisfied with their stations, it will have exactly the opposite effect; that instead of leading to discontent and envy at those above them, and making them fretful and idle, it will rather prevail on them not to covet nor desire other men's goods and conditions, but to learn and labour truly to get their own living, in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call them.

Let me appeal to your experience; most of you, doubtless, at one time or other, have employed servants or labourers, who had arrived at the degree of knowledge of which we speak; could you perceive that this circumstance weakened either their inclination



SERM. cination or their ability to serve you?

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Did their having been early taught their duty to God, and being frequently able by books to remind themselves of it, make them less attentive to your concerns? Did their having been betimes instructed, that they ought to do unto their neighbour as they would wish their neighbour to do unto them, render them more ready to impose on you themselves, or to suffer you to be imposed on by others? Did their knowing how to spend a part of the sabbath with their Bible in their hands, or in some other useful reading, cause them to handle the plough, the spade, or the flail, with less strength or dexterity? The idea is ridiculous!

Having thus addressed myself to those of my audience, who are to bestow this charity, I will now say a few words to those who are to receive it. Remember then (it is to the parents that I speak, to those



those parents I mean, who are themselves SERM.  
XXI.  
unable to give their children an education) remember that the plan which we are now forming is to confer on your children the greatest of all possible benefits; it is to confer on them the knowledge of God, and of their duty towards him; it is to teach them how to behave themselves properly towards their neighbours, and consequently the way to be loved and respected; it is to enforce on them the necessity of being honest and industrious, which is the surest means of gaining a livelihood, and getting forward in the world; it is to inculcate upon them their obligation to be sober, chaste, and temperate, without which virtues no man can be either amiable or happy; and, lastly, above all, it is to put them in the way of obtaining eternal salvation.

Let me entreat you, then, not to be backward in profiting by this useful insti-

**SERM.** tution; seek to get your children admitted  
**XXI.** into it, and do all in your power to make  
them observe its rules; take care that  
their attendance be constant, and that they  
come at the appointed hours, and send  
them as neat and as decent as your cir-  
cumstances will admit.

Nothing, I can promise you, shall be  
wanting on my part to their improvement;  
and there is every reason to hope, from the  
circumstances of our society, that we shall  
raise such a subscription as will enable us  
to confer rewards on those children who  
shall most distinguish themselves by their  
regularity, good behaviour, and proficiency  
in learning.

**SERMON**



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## SERMON XXII.

### THE EVILS OF BAD COMPANY.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 33.

*Evil communications corrupt good manners.*

AMONG the many dangers to which we are exposed during our earthly pilgrimage, there are none against which men, in every period of life, should be more on their guard, than those which arise from bad company. It is dangerous to our character, dangerous to our fortune, dangerous to our quiet, dangerous to our morals, and, lastly, it is dangerous to our eternal salvation. The young and inexperienced are with difficulty made to comprehend, and to believe this assertion; well assured of their

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present integrity, they are unwilling to think that any argument, any invitation, any example can induce them to part with it; proud of their good character, and conscious perhaps, at this time, of deserving it, they will not allow that it rests on so unstable a foundation,—that so trivial a circumstance as their conversing with this or that set of acquaintance, should have power to injure it; and as they are steadfastly determined, that the accidental excesses, to which they may occasionally give way, shall never interfere with their application to study, or to business, they do not see how their fortune, or their quiet, should suffer from it. As to their morals, they will not do themselves so much injustice as to apprehend, for a moment, that any thing external can influence them! But, notwithstanding this presumption, effects will follow their causes; and he who is not careful in the choice of his companions, what-

whatever precautions he may form against them, will be sure to suffer, sooner or later, in one, or all, of these particulars, which I have mentioned. SERM.  
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In the first place, I have asserted that bad company is dangerous to our characters. To have the same attachments and dislikes, the same pursuits and aversions, has always been esteemed the foundation of friendship; similarity of disposition, of sentiments, of manners, is the usual bond which unites companions together; to the truth of this, every language, by its proverbial maxims, bears testimony; and undoubtedly, generally speaking, it is true; for what communion has light with darkness? what fellowship the votaries of religion and virtue, with the children of profaneness and debauchery? I will not however deny but that a virtuous man may for a time (long he cannot) take up his abode in the tents of ungodliness, and pre-



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serve his honour and his conscience untainted; but still I assert that his character will suffer:—the world forms its judgments by general rules, and knowing how much, for the most part, companions resemble each other, it has neither sufficient candour, nor sufficient leisure, to examine for exceptions; when it sees a man a frequent spectator of the excesses of the vicious, it takes for granted that he is a partaker also, and an approver of them; nor is it in all cases, nor in any immediately, that by forsaking his profligate intimates, he can recover the good name which he has lost.

But if bad company be thus hurtful to our characters, it is probable that it will have a proportionable pernicious influence on our fortunes. Reputation has been always looked on as the surest step to wealth and preferment. Whoever wishes to advance himself, esteems a good character as useful, if not essential, to that end, and is



as anxious to preserve it, as the miser to SERM.  
preserve his gold. If he is accused of XXII.  
vices or follies, of which he knows himself  
to be innocent, he complains of the injury  
to his reputation, as an injury to his for-  
tune: but what ground would there be for  
such anxiety, or such complaint, if it were  
not observed, in general, that to be well  
spoken of, facilitated and forwarded our ad-  
vancement, while the contrary, in an equal  
degree, prevented or retarded it?

But I have already proved that our cha-  
racters are hurt by bad company, and there-  
fore it follows of course that the injury is  
extended to our fortunes also. Let the  
ambitious, the covetous, those who aspire  
after dignity or wealth, think of this,  
and if they have no *better* motive for de-  
clining the society of the vicious, let them  
decline it as they have regard to the grati-  
fication of their favourite passion; let them  
be restrained by their interest, if they have

SERM. lost their virtue. Bad company may like-

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wise hurt our advancement in life another way, as it usually involves us in idleness and extravagance, and leads us to dissipate, or, at least, to neglect to improve, the provision bequeathed us by our ancestors; but this is so self-evident, that I shall not dwell on it.

I go on then to prove what I asserted, in the next place, that bad company is dangerous to our quiet. Let us suppose a man of religion and virtue to cherish an intimacy with one, whom he knows to be deficient in both these respects; let us suppose that he is induced to it, either by the hopes of reforming him, by some latent sparks of goodness which he may imagine that he has seen in him, or merely on account of the pleasure which he may take in that ease and elegance of manners, which the vicious sometimes possess; qualifications which, it is well known, are not incompatible



compatible with the most abandoned profligacy! Let us suppose that the first mentioned person is so established in his integrity and reputation, that neither suffer from the connexion, still I assert that his quiet is in danger, for that he cannot reasonably expect, but opportunity and passion inviting, his companion will take the same liberties at his expence, which he well knows he has often done at the expence of others. As he who takes a viper frequently to his bosom, though he may awhile escape with impunity, will one time or other certainly repent of his rashness; so let that man beware, who has made choice of a confirmed vicious character for his intimate, for however strong in appearance his attachment be, if appetite or interest invite, he will certainly sting him to the heart.

Vice is of a very base and ungenerous nature; it is governed solely by self, and is there-

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therefore totally incapable of true friendship; it may frequently put on its semblance, but sooner or later, if occasion arise, it will afford evidence too convincing, how far remote it is from possessing the reality. Can any reliance be placed on him, who lives in a continued state of disobedience and ingratitude to his Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, that he will not, when any imaginary pleasure or profit may accrue to him by it, betray or even ruin his fellow-creatures. But if, added to this state of rebellion towards God, he has been known in his general commerce with his brethren to be false and treacherous, is it not the height of folly in any individual to expose his family and affairs to his machinations, under the vain hope that he should belie his general conduct to be true to him alone? Yet, in spite of all the examples of broken faith, of the honour of relations violated, and important trusts betrayed, with

with such pleasing outward talents is the libertine frequently endowed, that there are multitudes of unsuspecting persons, who are constantly making the experiment, though the event almost as constantly turns out in the interruption or ruin of their quiet.

But the injury to our character, to our fortune, and to our quiet, which arises from bad company, is of trivial importance, in comparison of that which remains to be considered.—Bad company is prejudicial to our morals, and of consequence dangerous to our eternal salvation. Man is, by nature, prone to imitation; this is observed by every wise parent, and turned as much as possible to their children's advantage, by every good one. Those teachers and those companions are always selected who, it is believed, will set the fairest and most virtuous examples. Much depends on the observance of this caution; our manners, both in childhood and

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and in youth, are commonly copied from those amongst whom we live; and the subsequent periods of life usually take colour from the habits which we have acquired during those early seasons. Though the genius and the understanding may be derived from nature, it is education, for the most part, which forms and fashioneth the heart; by education, I not only mean that portion of it, more properly so called, the instructions, the counsels, which we receive from parents and masters, but those lessons, likewise, which we imbibe, in some measure, from all who are suffered to approach us—lessons which are derived from a much more efficacious source than formal precept—from familiar conversation and example. What we are taught, however wise, virtuous, and prudent, will have little effect on us, if it be contradicted by what we see; in vain does a father instil into his son the purest principles of morality—in  
vain



vain does he exhibit, in his own conduct, a pattern of the most perfect obedience to them, if his house and table be open to vicious inmates, and his children permitted to be spectators of their excesses. If a young person perceives that vice is no exclusion from the countenance and familiarity of those whom he has been accustomed to honour, it cannot but greatly diminish the abhorrence in which he has been taught to hold it. But though it is in the earliest periods of life, when the principles are unfixed and the mind open to every impression, that bad company is chiefly dangerous;—there is no time in which it can be frequented with security. Many have begun the world with the greatest applause, have afforded to their anxious friends the fairest prospects of them—have even arrived at a mature period of manhood, without a material deviation from the path of virtue, and have then

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then suddenly blasted all the hopes, which have been formed of them, by the fatal prevalence of bad company. Besides the tendency in man, already noticed, to imitate what he constantly sees, there is yet another cause of danger to the morals, from profligate associates. It is the property of vice to endeavour to draw over to its party all who come within its influence :—the libertine, the drunkard, and all the other votaries of profligacy, have ever taken delight to render others as wicked as themselves ; to compass this point, they spare no arguments, no solicitations :—the sons of virtue, I fear, are not half so anxious to make converts as the children of darkness to make apostates. Let not him, therefore, who has not sufficient self-denial to decline the society of the vicious, flatter himself that he shall have sufficient fortitude to withstand their temptations ; more particularly when supported, as they  
always



always are, by the shafts of ridicule. If he SERM.  
preserve his integrity, his escape is mi- XXII.  
raculous; his temerity merits not that he  
should:—for who does not deserve the fate  
he experiences, who unnecessarily exposes  
himself to a danger from whence little less  
than a miracle can rescue him without  
destruction? Let me not, however, be mis-  
taken; I do not mean that any such in-  
evitable hazard is incurred by our ac-  
cidentally falling into the society of the  
profligate; or that, on account of the unea-  
siness we occasionally undergo in their  
company, we should therefore altogether  
avoid it; for if this were required of us,  
we must needs, as St. Paul observes, go  
out of the world; we must abstain from  
all intercourse with mankind whatever;  
and besides, there would be a want of cha-  
rity in such extreme caution, for if the  
vicious were driven to herd with them-  
selves, exclusively, all hope of their re-  
forma-



SERM. formation would be done away. Vice,  
XX. though sufficiently infectious, is not, I trust, by those at all well principled, to be imbibed at casual interviews; what I wish you to guard against is a fondness for a delight in the society of vice, whatever seducing attractions it may possess—and against an intimacy, a close connexion with the vicious; you may perform, with safety, the offices of civility and neighbourhood to them, but you are not to take them for intimates; if you do, be assured that you will one day, in the bitterness of your heart, lament it, when you attribute to them, as you justly may, one or all of these calamities—the ruin of your character—the injury done to your fortune—the interruption of your quiet—the perversion of your morals—or (which God forbid) the loss of your eternal salvation.

SERMON

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## SERMON XXIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

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LUKE viii. 8.

*And other fell upon good ground, and sprang  
up, and bare fruit an hundred fold.*

THESE words are the conclusion of the SERM.  
parable of the sower who went out to sow XXIII.  
his seed. The whole of it is thus related  
by St. Luke.—“ A sower went out to sow  
“ his seed, and as he sowed, some fell by  
“ the way side, and it was trodden down,  
“ and the fowls of the air devoured it; and  
“ some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it  
“ was sprung up it withered away, be-  
“ cause it lacked moisture. And some  
“ fell



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“ fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang  
“ up with it and choked it. And other fell  
“ upon good ground, and sprang up, and  
“ bare fruit an hundred fold.”

This parable was spoken by Jesus Christ to the people at large, and, at their request, explained afterwards to his disciples in private. The different ways in which the gospel would be received at its first publication, is, perhaps, the chief object of it, but it certainly applies, very naturally and exactly, to mankind in every subsequent period. By the word of God is meant, religion, and you have here the behaviour of four different sorts of persons, on having it proposed to them.

First, you have those, into whose heart any pious instruction falls, like seed sown by the way side; it makes perhaps none, or perhaps only a momentary impression; for as the birds instantly pick up the seed, so the devil comes immediately and removes



moves the impression of the word of God, SERM.  
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if any at all be made; and they, who have heard it, profit nothing by it.

How many are there, who, on receiving any pious advice from their parents, their graver friends, or their minister, or perhaps on accidentally meeting with it in any good book, are filled with disbelief and contempt, ridicule it as the product of bigotry and superstition, or, if by chance it gain a momentary reception with them (as even with the most abandoned, so irresistible is truth, it sometimes will do) they suffer the great enemy of their salvation, the very next instant, to drive it from their minds. There are but too many of this first class, but they bear no proportion to those of the two next, which are described by our Saviour.

For, secondly, we have the seed sown on the rock, by which those are depicted who receive religious instruction with joy; for

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a while

**SERM.** a while believe, but, having no root, in  
**XXIII.** time of temptation fall away.

Now people of this description are much more common than absolute unbelievers; religion carries with it so much authority, and is so congenial to the nature of man, that the generality, at one time or other of their lives, listen to its dictates with pleasure—confess in their hearts, the source of comfort which might be derived from it—resolve, perhaps faintly, to act in compliance with its commands,—but in time of temptation (when some circumstance happens, in which their temporal and eternal interest is at variance,—in which their inclination points one way, and their duty another; when they are required to make some great sacrifice, of their life perhaps, or their character, or their friends, or their property) they fall away, they prefer earth to heaven, they shew clearly, that with whatever delight they at first appeared



peared to receive religion, it took no root in their hearts, since they basely and poorly sacrifice it sometimes even to the slightest considerations.

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The persons chiefly aimed at by our Saviour here were, I believe, those early Christians, whom he foresaw would renounce their faith on the persecutions that would be carried on against them. These persecutions were very dreadful; they extended not only to imprisonment, bonds, stripes, but to death also, and that frequently in the most terrible torments. We of this day can scarce wonder, much less ought we too harshly to censure, if flesh and blood, in some instances, were not able to stand out against such formidable assaults; and yet there were multitudes of every age and sex who resisted unto blood, who willingly, nay joyfully, laid down their lives, rather than abandon the good part which they had chosen.



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We (blessed be God for it) live in more quiet times, we are not likely to be called to such hazardous trials of our constancy; we shall scarce be exposed to temptations of this extreme kind; it is therefore the more incumbent upon us to make the trifling renunciations, and to incur the petty dangers to which we may, and most probably shall, even now, be summoned. The world often expects from us one thing, and our religion demands of us another; supposing we comply with the latter, we shall lose, perhaps, some one who may call himself a friend, or we shall injure our fortune, or, what is more likely, we shall fall under the censure of our neighbours; our understanding or our spirit will be called in question; we shall be esteemed singular, affected, and morose, or we shall become, possibly, only a momentary jest to our companions. Terrible discouragements these from doing what God commands,

mands, and what our own hearts dictate! and yet experience may convince us that there are multitudes (alas! too probably, we ourselves are of the number) who are perpetually induced by them, slight as they are, to speak and to act in direct opposition both to their knowledge and their inclination. Perhaps you hope (particularly when the instance appears trifling) that there is more of folly than of guilt in this; but remember, that the more trifling the instance is, the less serious can be your sufferings or danger in not complying with it! remember, likewise, that the gradation from small concessions to great, is easy and precipitate; and remember, above all, the menace of our Saviour, which is directed against those, who, from a foolish regard to the opinion of the world, are induced to act in contradiction to what they know and feel to be right:—  
“Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and

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XXIII



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“ of my words, in this adulterous and sin-  
ful generation, of him, also, shall the Son  
of man be ashamed, when he cometh in  
the glory of the Father, with the holy  
angels.”

We will now proceed to consider the third sort of persons, described by our Saviour as having the word of God offered to them. Their reception of it is likened to ground overgrown with thorns, receiving good seed; as the thorns spring up with the seed, choke it in its growth, and prevent it from coming to maturity, so the love of riches, of pleasures, of honours, predominate in the mind of these men, entirely outgrow the word of God, and suffer it not to attain to any degree of perfection. This is certainly the case with greatly too many; they have received, perhaps, a pious education, and were once fully persuaded, that the care of their immortal souls is the one thing needful, or, perhaps even now,



now, whenever they are brought to think SERM.  
XXIII.  
seriously on the subject, they acknowledge  
in their hearts its reality and consequence;  
they believe firmly that there are such  
places as heaven and hell for the virtuous  
and for the wicked; they feel some faint  
aspirations after the happiness allotted to  
those who die in the Lord, and are more  
deeply sensible of the terrible circumstance  
of falling into the hands of an offended and  
avenging God. These are promising im-  
pressions, if they would but remain,—fair  
seeds, if they could but be brought to ma-  
turity; but, alas! they are fallen among  
thorns; they have gained admittance into  
an heart, in which this world, its cares and  
its pleasures are uppermost, and by these  
they are early blasted in their rise, and  
immaturely destroyed. The things of this  
world, by being immediately present, and  
perpetually the objects of our senses, have  
an undue influence with us; this we cannot  
but

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but acknowledge, when we compare them with the things of the next; but, perhaps, we enter into the comparison very seldom, or, perhaps, it makes but very slight impression, and is driven from our minds the very next moment by the first human care or pleasure which comes across us. However this be, there are multitudes apparently going on, as if there were no life after this, who yet do not pretend to deny there is one; but they *must* (they say) attend to raising their fortunes here, or, they are determined that they will enjoy their pleasures, and leave futurity to shift for itself. Is this wise, is this prudent? or rather, is it not the extremity of folly and madness? Shall I, when called up to take such steps as may secure to me the greatest happiness to all eternity, shall I allege that I must beg to be excused, that I am attending to my farm or my merchandise, by which I expect to be richer

or



or more prosperous for the next dozen or score years, and that as to what comes after, I will take my chance? SERM.  
XXIII.

I do not, myself, think that there are many unbelievers in the world; I am persuaded that the being of a God, a future state of rewards and punishments, are too deeply engraven on the human mind for many to be able to shake them off: but yet it is too evident that numbers live as if they did not believe in them;—why else do present cares and pleasures so greatly preponderate?—why are there found men who will prefer almost any other engagement, however slight, to attending to the duties of religion?—why are there those who, living in the greatest affluence themselves, can scarce be prevailed on to part even with their superfluities to assist their distressed brethren, when they know that their blessed Redeemer has promised that he will reward all kindness done to the needy,



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needy, in the same manner as if it had been done to himself? — why are there those who are men-pleasers, rather than pleasers of God; who prefer the approbation of their fellow-creatures, to the approbation of their Creator; who will venture to incur the divine displeasure, rather than run the hazard of hurting their fortunes or their interest, or relinquishing some trifling amusement? — why, lastly, are there those who, still more impious, are continually affronting God, by taking his holy name in vain, in direct defiance of his express commands? Do not these men act as if they did not believe? Would they not be more consistent, if this were really the case?

If there be not another world, let us make the most of this; let us eat, drink, and be merry; let us follow the bent of inclination, wherever it lead us. If we were sure of this, I really do not see that

we

we should be culpable (however mistaken we might be in the means) in pursuing what appeared to us to make the most for our present happiness; but if there be another world, nay, if there be but the slightest chance that there may be one, it is worth our while to pause and to hesitate; it is worth our while to consider, whether the paltry, short pleasures which are to be enjoyed here, are deserving that we should run for them, even the most distant possibility of being miserable for ever. But there is;—there is a world after this: and, as I observed before, even the greatest sinners do not, generally speaking, pretend to deny it; and yet, in the grossest defiance to common sense and prudence, they will not pay any regard to it, but bestow all their attention on their present state; the seeds of piety, of carefulness with respect to futurity, were originally sown in their nature, but they have been entirely



SERM. entirely overgrown and choked by the  
 XXIII. thorns of earthly cares and pleasures.

There is still a fourth description of persons, mentioned in the parable, by whom the word of God is not received in this ungracious, unthankful, unproductive manner. These are likened to the good ground, which bears fruit an hundred fold; they are represented as hearing, with an honest and good heart, the precepts of religion, steadfastly retaining them, and bringing forth the due fruits with patience. These fruits are piety and virtue, reverence to our Creator, and good-will to our fellow-creatures, with an uniform habit on every opportunity of exhibiting both in practice. This must be done with patience; that is, we must persevere in it unweariedly, so long as it pleases heaven that we remain in this world: if we draw back at any time of our lives, and die before we repent, God will have no pleasure in



in us.—“All the righteousness that we have  
“ done before, shall not be mentioned; it  
“ shall be counted for nothing; in the ini-  
“ quity, that we have committed, we shall  
“ die.” St. Peter is very express on this  
head:—“ If, after they have escaped the  
“ pollutions of the world through the  
“ knowledge of the Lord and Saviour  
“ Jesus Christ, they are again entangled  
“ therein, and overcome; the latter end is  
“ worse with them than the beginning.”

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We must, therefore, continue our exertions to the end of our course, we must fight the good fight to the conclusion of our spiritual warfare, or it will avail us nothing. Those who thus persevere, in spite of all temptations to the contrary (whatever the children of this world may arrogate to themselves) are the only truly wise; by giving a decided preference to the things that are to last for ever and ever, over those which last only for a few short years,

**SERMON.** years, they not only with certainty obtain  
**XXIII.** them, but as a present reward as well as  
 natural consequence of their wisdom, they  
 usually enjoy an infinitely greater portion  
 of prosperity during their continuance on  
 earth.

— It is not that they have escaped the  
 pollutions of the world through the  
 knowledge of the Lord and Saviour  
 Jesus Christ, they are again entangled  
 therein and overcome; the latter end is  
 worse with them than the beginning.  
 We must therefore continue our exertions  
 to the end of our course, we must fight  
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 spiritual warfare, or it will avail us no-  
 thing. Those who thus persevere in spite  
 of opposition to the contrary, what  
 ever the children of this world may at-  
 tempt to themselves, are the only truly  
 wise, giving a decided preference to the  
 things that are to last for ever and ever,  
 over those which last only for a few short  
 years.

**SERMON**



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## SERMON XXIV.

THE DANGER OF PROCRASTINATION. FELIX.

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ACTS XXIV. LATTER PART OF V. 25.

*Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.*

AMONG the various kinds of self-deception, that of all others is the most dangerous, by which we lull ourselves into contentment with our present vicious course of life, on a persuasion that we shall repent and reform at some future time: for however wickedly men may *live*, it is certain that the generality desire to *die* holily; almost all believe that there is a God above, who delights in and will reward piety and virtue, and who hates and will punish iniquity and vice; they know therefore, and whenever they think about it will acknowledge, that accordingly as they behave themselves in this life, such will be their

SERM.  
XXIV.



SERM. lot to all eternity. With such a conviction it would be almost impossible for them to continue in their sins, if they did not impose on themselves with the intention, and really make themselves believe, that they purpose one day to repent of all that is past, and live, or at least die, good Christians.

To shew the folly and danger of continuing in our sins, on this presumption, that we shall one day repent of them, and, for that reason, of delaying and putting off our repentance and reformation, shall be my endeavour in the following discourse.

In the first place, so uncertain is human life, that we cannot promise to ourselves another day; there is no one of us, who has arrived at any age, who cannot recollect instances of some friend or acquaintance unexpectedly snatched away by death, who was as likely to have been alive at this time as himself. What has happened

pened to others, we all know may happen to ourselves. Without repentance, our Bible tells us, we cannot attain salvation; how absurd is it then to venture so great a stake on so desperate a chance as the continuance of human life!

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We will grant, for a moment, that a man is in earnest in his design of repenting of his past sins, and living virtuously at some future time; we will suppose that he even fixes the very time; (for an intention of doing a thing one time or other without fixing when, can scarcely be called any intention at all) we will suppose then that he fixes the very time, let it be two years distant, or one year, or a month, nay, let it be only one day; let him seriously have determined and vowed, — ‘ I will repent and be virtuous to-morrow;’ “ Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be “ required of thee;” the sword of death is constantly hanging over thy head, how soon it will fall, God alone knows:—To-



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day alone is thine; but to-day thou hast resolved to continue in thy sins; if then thou livest not till to-morrow, what must be thy fate to all eternity? We cannot deny but this is possible, and if it *be* possible, how great is our folly to neglect the opportunity which is in our power, for one at which we may never arrive?

Even in this view, considering the uncertainty of human life, and the possibility, nay the probability, that we may never reach the time which we have fixed for repentance, to postpone it is highly absurd and hazardous: but there is yet another danger, even if we *do* arrive at the time fixed on, and that is, that we may not be then disposed to put our design in execution. If we find it so hard to part with our sins *now*, we may be assured that the difficulty will be greatly increased by delay; what we have been long accustomed to do, we never quit without much reluctance and great efforts, and in proportion to the length



length of time that we have practised any thing, reluctance to lay it aside will be greater, and our efforts must by consequence be increased. To repent and reform, may be easy now; sin, perhaps, is new to us; we are not yet confirmed in the habits of it: but if we go on and inure ourselves to it, to cast it off may not, and probably will not, be in our power.

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The prophet Jeremiah represents the reformation of a sinner, accustomed to a long course of sinning, as so unlikely as to be impossible:—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil:" not that there is any real impossibility in the case, but it is so very difficult, and happens, I fear, so very seldom, that it may almost be said never to happen at all.

Let us not then persuade ourselves that our sins will be less pleasing to us at some

A a 3

future

SERM. future time, than they are at present:

XXIV.

habit will certainly have increased our attachment to them, and it will require an infinitely greater portion of self-denial to forsake them. It is much to be feared, that when the time arrives, at which we fixed to begin our repentance, we shall again find some excuse to postpone it to a distant day; and so we may go on continually resolving, and continually lingering in our sins, till the hour of death arrives, puts a final period both to resolutions and exertions, and irrevocably determines our condemnation.—In the grave there is no repentance.—How shall we then condemn our folly, and execrate our weakness, for so absurdly neglecting the opportunities, which were our own, and trusting to one, which a little common reflection might have told us, we should never think arrived.—In that banishment from the presence of God, which the wicked will suffer after death, the recollection of  
their



their neglect of the time and opportunity which was granted them for the acquisition of eternal happiness, will not probably be one of their least punishments.

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If a man in this world miscarries in any scheme, or meets with any loss, which he might have prevented by a little common prudence and labour, how greatly does the thought of such negligence embitter the disappointment! how then must the remembrance of that man's imprudence torment him, which has deprived him of eternal happiness, and doomed him to everlasting misery!

But to return: those, I believe, who continue to put off their repentance, and who yet are convinced of its necessity, and think that they shall one day certainly set about it, encourage themselves in this delay by the repeated declarations, which they meet with in scripture, of the mercy and long-suffering of God. To a truly penitent sinner God will no doubt grant forgiveness;

A a 4

but



SERM. but besides the probability of a man's being  
XXIV. cut off in his sins, before he arrives at the  
time of repentance, there is great reason  
to fear that God may be so far provoked  
by his repeated delays, as to deny him the  
assistance of his holy spirit; and without  
that, all his former good resolutions will  
be vain. God hath indeed solemnly pro-  
mised to give his holy spirit to those who  
ask it, but then it must be to such as ask  
it properly; and how far a long continu-  
ance in sin may harden our hearts, and  
prevent the efficacy of our prayers, it is  
impossible to determine, and highly dan-  
gerous to hazard the experiment. If our  
consciences *now* remonstrate with us on  
the folly and danger of our past sinful life,  
if we *now* feel within ourselves any dispo-  
sition towards repentance, let us consider  
such remonstrances and such dispositions  
as the immediate suggestion of heaven;  
let us attend to them, let us obey them;  
the gate of mercy is now open to us, let  
us

us haste and enter: let us not put off to SERM.  
a future time, what perhaps at a future XXIV.  
time we shall not be able to perform!  
*now* it is in our power, and we may be  
assured God will assist us; the very incli-  
nation that we feel towards it, is an earnest  
that he will! *Now*, this present moment,  
if we are sincere, is the time to make our  
peace with him: if we put it off, it may  
never be in our power again; the day of  
grace may be past—the time of reconcilia-  
tion gone for ever!

The opinion, I fear, is but too common,  
that repentance and reformation are the  
works of a moment; and that if a man has  
but time to shed a few tears, and say a few  
prayers a little while before his death, he  
will atone for the sins of a whole life, and  
find acceptance with God.

The mistake (for a mistake it certainly  
is) is a very dangerous one.—To sin, we  
all know, alas! is very easy; yet no one  
arrives at once, even at the height of  
wicked-



SERM. wickedness ; by gradual and slow steps,  
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even that fatal progress is made : but infinitely more gradual, and infinitely more slow, is the progress of a sinner towards righteousness ; it requires much time and many efforts to lay aside his vices and to acquire the opposite virtues — he hath many things to learn and many to forget ; he hath to repair perhaps much injury which he hath done, and to atone certainly for much bad example which he hath set ; he hath not only to leave off sin, and to practise virtue, but he hath also to learn to detest the former and to delight in the latter ; he hath to acquire the habit of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.

I would not be understood to say that never any sinner, who had only a short time allowed him for repentance, met with mercy. The great searcher of hearts, who can alone judge of the sincerity of his conversion, if he perceives that he is thoroughly



roughly and effectually touched, and that, if life were lent him, he would no more return to his wickedness, will probably condescend to accept his repentance, tho' he lived not to reform;—but with the dying person himself, and his surviving friends, great fears must ever remain.—Instances, I fear, are too numerous, of apparent penitents, returning from the confines of the grave, who, immediately on their recovery, have forgot all their pious vows and resolutions, and whose last state has been worse than their first. No one can say that such might not have been the case with his deceased friend, if he had recovered, however penitent he may have seemed; and I am very sure that no one in his own case ought to trust to it.

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The time of health and strength is the only proper time for the business of religion; it demands, and will employ, our most powerful exertions; and then only, can

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can we be sure that our reformation is sincere, after we have lived for some time a pious, a virtuous life, when the danger of speedily dying is, or appears to be, remote from us. — Our good resolutions may be, otherwise, only the effects of sickness and terror — transient as the morning clouds and early dew — which returning health and apparent security would soon render abortive.

I shall conclude this discourse by calling your attention to the words of the text, and to the subsequent conduct of the person who uttered them. — “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” They were spoken by the Roman governor, Felix, on this occasion: — St. Paul had been sent a prisoner from Jerusalem to Cesarea, that he might plead his cause, and answer to the accusations of the Jews, before Felix. Felix had already heard his defence; but after a few days, he had an inclination to hear



hear again from him some account of SERM.  
Christianity; he accordingly sent for him XXIV.  
to preach before himself and his wife  
Drusilla: the scripture tells us the sub-  
jects on which he spoke, and its effects on  
his hearer.—“As Paul reasoned of right-  
“eousness, temperance, and judgment to  
“come, Felix trembled; and he said unto  
“Paul, Go thy way for this time; when  
“I have a convenient season I will call  
“for thee.” Felix resembled, I fear, too  
many of these days; he was convinced, by  
the preacher’s reasoning, and the whispers  
of his own conscience, of the enormity  
and danger of sin, and of the necessity of  
piety and virtue; he felt the folly and ab-  
surdity of his former course of life, and  
formed some loose, unsteady resolutions of  
amending it; — but when? — not at that  
present time, the most proper of all  
others, when his understanding was con-  
vinced and his heart touched, and when  
it might have pleased God that, by his  
hearing



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hearing the preacher farther, and by his own endeavours, he might have been thoroughly converted; — no! — he was for putting off the evil hour, for such it appeared to him, persuaded as he was of the necessity that it must one day arrive, or himself everlastingly perish. He refuses to listen to the salutary terrors that had begun to assail him, and dismisses his instructor somewhat hastily and abruptly; “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” Did this convenient season ever arrive? — no! — he kept Paul confined two years, and during that time had him brought before him frequently; not that he might profit by his discourses, not that he might be perfected in the reformation, which seemed to have been began by the remorse which Paul had once excited in him; but, as the scripture tells us, in hopes that he might have received money of his prisoner, to let him go free. And still farther, when  
he

he was removed from his government, SERM.  
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willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, that is, desirous to atone for the many acts of oppression of which he had been guilty, and to prevent their complaints from pursuing him, which we find they afterwards did, he left Paul bound. You see that, during two whole years, this convenient season of hearing Paul, as he ought to have been heard, never arrived: he sent for him, it is true, often; but as it was only with the expectation he would offer money for his release, he was likely to profit but little from his discourse on any other subject; and that he did profit but little, is evident, from his leaving an innocent man still a prisoner.

Happy would it have been for Felix, if he had suffered the preacher's reasoning, and the voice of his own conscience, to have that immediate effect, which they ought to have had! they were so forcible, and came so home to him, that he could no other-  
wise

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wise elude and destroy their influence than by postponing the hour of reflection till a future time.—His delay was his ruin.—Let *us* take warning by it; and whenever either the preacher's admonitions, the advice of friends, the perusal of good books, the whispers of our own hearts, or the suggestions of God's holy spirit, awaken in us a sense of contrition and remorse, and a resolution of living virtuously in future; let us instantly attend to them, and begin directly to act in consequence; let us not put off our reformation till *to-morrow*, but begin the blessed work to-day, whilst it is called to-day, lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

*FINIS.*